TRUE BLUE

"She had driven the reaper." — Page 11. (*Frontispiece.*)

"TRUE BLUE."

A STORY OF THE GREAT NORTH-WEST.

BY

Mrs. Lucia Chase Bell.

BOSTON:
D. LOTHROP & COMPANY,
FRANKLIN ST., CORNER OF HAWLEY.

[1878]

PZ3
.B4142Tr

Rept. 98.22

COPYRIGHT BY
D. LOTHROP & CO.
1878.

Anonymous
Mar 2 1932

CONTENTS.

Chap.		Page.
I.	In The Gentian Land	7
II.	A "Really" Girl	27
III.	Doc's Chronicles	44
IV.	The Tanners	58
V.	The "Rev. Jerrold Shaw"	65
VI.	In The "Spinning Rooms"	78
VII.	To Gaston	92
VIII.	The Spinning Bee	113
IX.	In Doc's Home	141
X.	The Round Table	157
XI	The St. Paul Girls	171
XII.	Aunt June's Parliamentary Lesson	179
XIII.	Sweet Alyssum	197
XIV.	The Mountain Goes to Mahomet	210
XV.	The Knights Start	221
XVI.	Doc Rides Her Circuit	234
XVII.	Sunny Days	253

"TRUE BLUE."

CHAPTER I.

IN THE GENTIAN LAND.

GEORDIE EARLE'S mother was about to take a long journey. An over-night journey, all by herself over the prairie to Steeplemix. One lone brave woman driving the cart and oxen, carrying a precious pail of butter and a very, very, lank little purse, to purchase the family supplies in Steeplemix.

The grass-hoppers had harvested the grain of the Earle farm months ago, leaving the ploughed earth naked, and Mr. Earle had taken his horses and wagon and gone, with most other farmers of this

northern prairie, to work on the new "Steeplemix and Sioux Valley R. R," which was to be pushed through before it came time for the snow to fly, and was a godsend to the half bewildered "grass-hopper farmers" because it gave them a chance to earn at least bread, for the babies at home, if not shoes and stockings and blizzard caps. As for "Christmas things" or New Year's gifts, every one of those far away farmers winced over his work, if thoughts of them came into his mind, and sorrowfully wished that Santa Claus and Kriss Kringle had never, never been heard of in this world. And in the meantime, Mamma Earle and her children and all the other women and children in the lonely country, bravely did the homework, and had their own secret thoughts and dread about Kriss Kringle and Santa Claus, as well as the winter's wood, and the little caps and shoes.

No wonder Geordie Earle had called this the "Gentian Land" ever since the first day she had known it, when they stopped away up here in the autumn silence and began to build that slender little house. Anybody who has ever walked in the fall through the sweet ripe prairie grass, among the hosts of vivid blue gentians, with the vivid gentian blue overhead, and the real gentian blue everywhere in the little

shining lakes, will know by that name just what country it is. All winter it keeps its gentian blue, in the sky, on the frozen lakes, and lurking softly in the hollows between the great marble-like snow-drifts; and more vividly than ever, through the short blithe summer, its sky and waters take on that rich glad hue.

And the Gentian Land was lovely now, notwithstanding the naked grain fields, and ghastly shredded corn stalks bleaching in the hot summer sunshine. As Geordie stood by the cart she knew just how a whole morning of drinking in the prairie air, with its delicious crispness, was going to rest her mother and make her feel glad and strong and courageous even if she was riding in a cart poking along behind oxen. But still she didn't covet her mother's ride. She was out of love with the Gentian Land this morning and wouldn't have taken another breath of its celestial air if she could help it.

To tell the truth, *Geordie was hungry;* and it is decidedly a disagreeable thing to be "hungry," especially when you belong to a good family, and have known what it is to have charming breakfasts and dainty lunches and really artistic dinners; when your mother's "teas" used to be a proverb, and the "Earle mite societies" crowded above all others, because

your mother's rooms were so pleasant and she "*would* furnish refreshments." Considering all this, to be actually in such a condition that your throat aches with babyish sobs that you almost sob out loud for just one good wholesome slice of white bread and a cup of coffee, is something that would make anybody feel cynical and unable to appreciate the glories of an unrivaled atmosphere.

To be sure, Geordie had had *something* for breakfast, so had they all. But the bread was bran bread, not graham, yes, actually rough bran, such as her father had fed to his horses. There was also a dish of unripe potatoes which had lain on the ground under the stripped vines till they had turned an unhealthy green and had the horrible puckering poor-potatoes taste. And there was pepper-mint tea, and milk, — yes, and boiled squash. The squash was nicely seasoned, but even good honest squash is likely to lose its attractions when you make it a regular diet.

And what hadn't Geordie done to keep along? What was there her mother had failed to do? It seemed as though they had all, from Papa Earle down to little mannikin Laurie strained every muscle and exerted every atom of strength, "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." Geordie had fought grass-hoppers, marching for hours and hours back and

forth in thick red clouds of them, till her very eyes were stung and beaten and blinded with the savage things; she had planted corn; she had set out trees; she had driven the reaper, sitting all day long with a throbbing headache under her sunbonnet, while the machine went clattering up and down the long prairie "swales" cutting the grass to burn in winter; she had helped the little boys twist this hay to burn, till her hands bled and were covered with smarting gashes and scratches; she had seen her piano sold, and had given up going back east to school, so that the house might be made warmer for winter, and the little children clothed comfortably in warm flannels.

All these things Geordie had done, bravely and cheerily, never faltering in her girlish love and hope for the Gentian Land, till this morning. But this morning, in her discomfort, the whole long series of self-denials and strivings loomed up till she felt like the greatest martyr of the nineteenth century, and the crossest.

"I suppose now I shall have a battle over the front room, all day," said she, mournfully, as she and her mother were folding blankets over the cart seat and making the uncouth vehicle comfortable as possible in every way.

Mamma Earle looked at her daughter with the least little stare, and then she smiled tenderly.

"Well, Geordie," she said, in the gentlest of well modulated voices, "I hope you'll endeavor to *begin* right. I know Sunday is your day to open the front room, and you don't wish to have the children in there any other day. But if I were you, I believe I would quietly open the doors and send them after bouquets to put in there — get up a little sweet fellowship feeling about it, you know, Geordie — and the children will help keep it in order, perhaps. Those lovely fringed orchises are out now — Max brought me a spray yesterday, mixed ever so daintily with wild pink roses."

She looked every inch a lady, the little brave eastern-bred woman perched up there, in her calico and gauntlets, cheerily smiling, while her small troop climbed and chattered around, excited over the event of seeing mamma start.

"See here, mamma," piped out Max's shrill voice as he scrambled up on the cart wheel to lean over, and look in. "I'm the man of the house now, you know. Shall I ask the blessing to the table while you're gone?" Max looked the very incarnation of eagerness, his gray eyes full of sparkle and his flossy white hair blowing back from a rather pale little face.

Mamma wasn't sure whether this was early piety or a desire to distinguish himself. In fact, it wasn't at all an unusual thing for her to be in just such a quandary concerning Max's eager little queernesses. But she answered gravely, with a little inward quaking of laughter, "I'm afraid Karl would interrupt and make trouble. You'd better just think a little thankful thought in your own heart, Max. We ought always do that."

"I can shake Karl if he laughs, or else put him out *first*," persisted Max; but observing his mother's face for an instant he added, with an answering twinkle, "Maybe though, I'd better not." Then he dropped off the wheel, and the oxen started, and the children's lonesome day was begun.

Geordie had a severely settled theory about the "front room," holding that "just because it's such a cheap little place it *must* be kept white and clean. Whiteness and primness are its charm — and so you *can't* let the boys in. It's really religious to keep one little refuge of purity in the house, for Sunday." And this morning even after what her mother had said she couldn't quite come up to the moral grandeur necessary to enable her to open the doors generously wide, and "let the boys in."

But she did wisely refrain from saying anything

when Nannie opened the door of the Sunday room poked her curly head in, and promptly drew it out again with the remark, "I s'pose prob'ly Geordie will be awful cross 'bout the front room, today; but we don't popose to go in 'fore afternoon, though. We're goin' to play war-wagon in the kitchen this forenoon, and I *guess* we shan't need the front room chairs, but I d'no sure."

An expression of dismay on Geordie's face caused Karl to put in with enthusiasm, "Why, Geordie must be you never heard of a war-wagon! You have lots o' chairs and you hitch up your wild horses to 'em, and you stand up in 'em, wiv your hair a-flying, and you go like sixty. We'll show you in a minute. Here, Laurie, you're to be the nenemy. We're goin' right through you now with our spears! They have knives to the wheels of war-wagons, too!"

The prospect was portentous, but finally Geordie did bravely resolve to "try mother's way" if things "came to the worst." One thing was certainly true. Mamma Earle hadn't an idea of what a trial those alert, little busybodies could be, once out from under her own quiet, mysterious, magnetic influence. A diet of squash and milk didn't seem to cast the least shadow of melancholy upon *them;* they throve gloriously on it, and were rather proud of this heroism

than otherwise, especially since they had heard mamma remark, to Geordie when they were writing letters back home, "There mustn't be one word of *how we're living*, Geordie. It must be soldiered through in silence."

As a general thing, Max was a comfort. He was a born busybody. Not of the disagreeable kind that always go poking and picking about into other people's affairs, but one of the jolly little busybodies, who fill up every minute with some task cheerfully performed, some lesson learned, some hearty play-plan vigorously carried on. Max's lessons weren't all learned out of books by any means. He loved every green growing thing on the prairie, and could tell you what kind of roots it had, when it budded, how its blossoms and its seed looked, and what kind of soil it liked best. Just when he learned it all, nobody knew.

It must have been here a little, and there a little of prying and picking about. He had a flower-garden, which was only a tangle of coarse flowers such as the grass-hoppers didn't find to their taste or "hadn't needed;" but every morning in the midst of his chores, Max found time for a long, hovering, puttering visit, straightening up that soldierly rank of big pungent, velvety marigolds, untangling the morning

glories, and gloating over the cheerful little patch of portulacca.

Max liked to "putter" with housework, too. Had a Cooking Club been in existence away out there, Max certainly ought to have been at least an honorary member. But alas, in that empty land, even the lively, original, and celebrated Cooking Club of Tu-Whit Hollow would have become an idle and dejected assemblage. Even Max mourned and would not be comforted because there weren't any tart crusts to twist in quaint shapes on Saturdays, and hardly ever any snow white heaps of snapping dough for him to knead into wonderful rolls with his stout fists.

This busybody had just found out *that he could read.* You needn't be surprised at that. There are children who can repeat whole Readers by heart, and cannot read at all. I know a man who says he can remember the very time when it first broke over him like a flash of light, that all those lessons in his old Third Reader "told something," and he went at it, and read that book just as eagerly as though it had been a new one. He felt as another man did when *he* was a little boy and first heard the birds sing — really heard them, you know, all making a splendid tangled-up wilderness of melody over in the woods across the road; and he climbed up on the fence and swung his old

straw hat and hurrahed till you couldn't have guessed which was craziest with delight, the boy or the birds. Max felt like a boy just set free, and as if somebody had suddenly cried out, "Here Max, run all around and gather your hat full of these pearls. Go where you please, and as fast as you please, all over the glorious round world." And Max was hungrily "gathering" every readable thing in the house as fast as his eyes would let him.

What he read, was haunting him, too, every minute. He went chanting about, all day long, the things he had been reading last to queer little tunes of his own. Upstairs you would hear Max's feet busily pattering to and fro as he deftly made up his own bed, while he sang in a funny little swinging rhythm:

> "Oh my little friend, the *squirlie*,
> Bravely have you toiled to help me,
> Take the thanks of Hiawatha,
> And the name which now he gives you!
> For hereafter and forever
> Boys shall call you Adjidaumo,
> Tail-in-air the boys shall call you!"

In a minute after it sounded out over the kitchen roof, where Max had gone to fix his whirligig, the same zigagging little tune:

> "*And* the deer came down the pathway,
> Flecked in leafy light and shadow —"

And for days and days, everywhere Max went and

through everything that he did, you heard the same piping numbers. It didn't disturb *him* at all; he didn't know anything about Mark Twain's misery with the "passenjaire" lingo, but chanted away, not caring whether anybody listened or not, or whether he ever stopped. It wasn't always poetry, but sometimes bits of orations, or pieces of dignified old-fashioned narrative delivered in such a loud declamatory breathless tone you more than half suspected Max intended it to be droll, notwithstanding that far away absorbed look on his face.

Geordie had plenty of leisure to brood over her troubles that long day, apart from the little teasings and enthusiasms of the busybodies, and as usual she spent a good deal of time in perusing various packages of perfumey pink-scribbled letters. What good times the girls were having, a thousand miles away, in the cool delicious evenings, flitting from piazza to piazza with laughter and song and chat! How many delightful amusements and benevolent entertainments they were always getting up — and how many they didn't! The ones they *didn't* were what stirred Geordie's lonesome soul to its inmost depths. To be away out here in the wide silence, with your head full of splendid things to do, and nobody to do them — that was wretchedness.

"A tableau of Ten Virgins indeed!" murmured poor Geordie to herself. "Just five girls walking across the stage first, with sheets around them, and good kerosene lamps lit in their hands, and then five other girls poking along after with *their* lamps gone out and the chimneys all dirty. And Jim Lee behind the scenes, singing 'Too late! Too late!' in a big bass voice to make it dreadful. If ever *I* get up a tableau of the Ten Virgins, I'll not have any poky old virgins wrapped up in sheets. The first five shall have bright robes of scarlet and gold, and jewelry and flowers, and gleaming lamps all decked with golden chains, and I'll have them march across the stage in red light, to the merry clash of wedding music. Then I'll have a tableau of the wedding feast with the wise virgins there — one gorgeous picture. After that, the room shall be darkened and the stage filled with a ghastly blue light, and my foolish virgins with bowed white faces, and trailing broken wreaths, and lamps hanging in limp hands, shall go mournfully and slowly across and away into the darkness — to the awfulest, solemn music that can be gotten up. If I couldn't have it so, I wouldn't have it at all. Who wants a cheap tableau?"

But the noisy day was done at last, the front room, with every chair out of its place, abandoned for

good, and bedtime with mother away had come. This was what Geordie dreaded. As usual she aggravated the trouble, in her anxiety to have it over, by insisting at too early an hour that the children should retire. She knew just how it would be. The busybodies would cheep and chatter hour after hour, till her nerves were thoroughly unstrung, and sleep made impossible for her, after which *they* would drop comfortably to sleep, leaving *her* wide awake, and miserably aware of every sound all the long night.

The Bible was one of Max's literary treasures, of course. Every real wide awake, healthy boy loves the Bible, for its stories if nothing else. And when Max once began to tell stories from the Bible, himself and listeners being snugly tucked in bed, nobody could tell just when the entertainment would be likely to come to a close. To-night, was one of Max's "David evenings." Since he wasn't Hiawatha, he thought he would rather have been David than anybody else that ever lived in this world. But much to his surprise and disgust, Karl insisted on "starting it, anyway."

"I can tell it, well 's you," said Karl. "There was an old man and his name was Jesse, and he let his three big boys go to the war, and there was 'n awful battle, and not one of those big boys dared to

go out and fight that old giant, and the giant, he walked in front of 'em all every day with his head up high as the clouds, and swored, and gritted his teeth — there ain't any giants 'round here, Laurie, if *you're* a-listening — and the Iserlites all creeped into their tents, and the king did, too. They huddled in their tents and whispered while the giant tramped up and down out there, a-gritting his teeth and poking up the ground with his spear. Well! Bimeby, old Mr. Jessie called David. David was his littlest boy, what had to stay home and tend to the sheep but he wanted to go up and see the battle, *awful* — I s'pose he did — and he had lots of chances to run away and go, but he didn't do it. But now he had a chance to go, 'cause his father wanted him to carry some pop corn up to the battle for his brothers. And when he got there those big brothers snubbed David, they did, and said, 'See here, we know what you're come up here, for. You've run off to see the battle. It's just like your tricks.' And David hadn't. And he went right out and thrashed that old giant and whacked his head off, and then the Iserlites and the king creeped out of their tents. And I should think you could see that big brothers shouldn't talk like that to little brothers."

I should think so, too. Big brothers cannot begin

to guess what hidden strength there may be in the little, rosy, bothering brothers, who *will* be always trotting around after them "to see the battles." But whatever Max thought of it, he hadn't the least opportunity to express himself, for the moment Karl stopped to take a good long breath, Nan called out from the adjoining bed-room:

"Well, now, I think the 'Lijah story mamma tells is a good deal better than giants — all about 'Lijah hiding away off in the dark woods; and how he wrapped hisself in his cloak to sleep, and in the morning he heard the birdie's wings coming *whir*, *whir*, *whir*, and in a minute there was 'Lijah's breakfast — O, my-ee! Geordie Earle, *Laurie Earle is all on fire!*"

Nan's tones had suddenly changed to a real shriek of terror, and there was a horrified rush from all sides to the "babies' bedroom." Was that child bewitched? Not the faintest smell of smoke, or flutter of flame, was apparent in that room, but Laurie himself was there in his crib, perched up on the pillows, his chubby face and hands, and even his breast and sleeves, illumined like a young seraph's.

"I *have* heard of spontaneous combustion," gasped Geordie, "but you — aren't an inebriate — Laurie Earle! O, the hideous smell of matches! Laurie,

you've been meddling with the matches! I *thought* I heard steps out there in the closet. It's phosphorus all over you, that's what it is! Get down here, sir!"

Geordie energetically assisted the young gentleman out of his crib, and conducted him to the kitchen sink, the culprit meanwhile plaintively declaring: "Phosphorse doesn't hurt any — does it? An' don't you s'pose I look like an angel? In spots I do, Geordie, and 'twouldn't rub off if you didn't put water on it. I *did* look like one — that great, big angel what shined down at Hagar all in a minute, when she didn't s'pect anyfing would happen."

"But I shall tie you to the table leg if 'anyfing' like this happens again," said Geordie, sternly.

It did seem, finally, when Geordie's charges were all once more safely established in bed, as though her annoyances would soon be forgotten in the sleep of the just. But Laurie's masquerade in the character of a heavenly visitant was not without its effect upon him, in the way of philosophical reflection. A soft, very soft and melodious little call suddenly awoke Geordie from the restful slumber into which she had fallen.

"Geordie! Geordie!"

Geordie sat up instantly, her cheeks flushed hot.

"Maybe he's sick," she whispered to herself, almost crying. "Mamma said if any of them called in the night I must go immediately and I *may* have been asleep for hours. Poor little mannikin, I know, 'most, he is sick!"

And like the affectionate little sister she really was, Geordie was soon holding the lamp above Laurie's crib, expecting to be confronted with real trouble this time.

"What is it, dear?" she asked, tenderly.

Laurie's two brown hands, with outspread fingers, beginning at his fat neck, slowly passed over the quilts down the length of his solid little body as far as they could reach, and he made the weighty inquiry, "Geordie, where did I get this being?"

"This *what?*" said Geordie.

Laurie's eyes dilated, and his eager thoughts fairly wrestled in his face. "This *Being!*" he repeated, with solemn earnestness. "*Where* did I get this being? Geordie, I finked 'bout it *all night. Couldn't* you stop me from finkin', Geordie? You can't tie me to the table-leg for just a-finkin'."

"No, dearie, I will not," was Geordie's compassionate reply, in spite of her vexation. "Come sleep in Geordie's bed, Laurie, and then we'll not 'fink' any more to-night."

Next morning, before Geordie was fully awake, a confused, but rather pleasantly expectant impression ran through her mind, that this was Fair day, or Fourth of July, or some sort of a Convention day, and that when she opened her eyes she would see the sun streaming blithely in through the mottled greenness by the dear familiar window in old Fairmount village. Presently she became a little more conscious, and knew where she was, and also that the noise she heard was that of heavy wagons rumbling and clattering swiftly by, along the dark prairie road. First — one, two, three in quick succession; in a minute, one more; then a short silence, and one, two, three, four again rattled along.

"What can it be?" thought Geordie, sitting up in bed, and peering through her window at the steady stream of wagons, and the great prairie with its creeping mists of morning. "Perhaps it's a show day," she said to herself, "only nobody has any money to spend that way. It might be a mass meeting, but they haven't any flags, and don't laugh and talk, and some of them, I do believe, are only half dressed, and they *hurry* so. Well, there's one thing, if they keep it up I'll not be quite so lonesome."

She dressed, with a real feeling of courage and cheer, hurried noiselessly down to the kitchen, and

started the fire for their poor little breakfast, thinking, "Oh, well, we can stand *one* more breakfast like this, and then things are going to be different."

Suddenly a quick, sharp rap called her to the door.

"Where's your folks?" sharply inquired the man standing there, and then, with a quick gesture, as if he would sweep them all safely out of the house, he continued rapidly, "You must get out of this. Beemanses went two hours ago, and Tottses have cleared out, and all the folks for fifteen miles above 'em. You're the only ones left, and the Injuns are coming! They're up at Big Shoe Lake. My wagon's full, but I'll pile you in somehow."

CHAPTER II.

A "REALLY" GIRL.

WAS this the Geordie Earle who had listened so nervously all night in the dark to every rustle and shiver of the grass, and every little nibble of mice in the wall?

It certainly was! but "mother's grit" was a common proverb in the Earle family. Any real or great need, or emergency, suddenly facing Mrs. Earle, always roused in her the truest courage and strength of will. And Geordie was like her; she thought in one breathless moment of all the stories of massacre she had ever heard, and of Custer's tragic death away out in the savage wilderness; but in a moment she had stepped noiselessly out into the path, that the children

might not hear, and with white lips she whispered:

"I'm frightened — I can't help it — because it sounds so terrible. But I don't believe they're coming. It must be a mistake. When we heard about the Custer tragedy mamma and I were shocked and nervous, till papa took a map and showed us just where those brave men died. It was hundreds of miles from here. The Indians on the reservations are all friendly — they're afraid of the wild ones themselves. There's a railroad at Steeplemix, and there's a strong line of posts for two hundred miles between us and the savages. They *couldn't* have come within one hundred miles of Big Shoe without our hearing of it as much as a week ago. Father wouldn't have left us if there'd been danger. And I'll not stir one inch."

"I guess you're crazy!" said the man, as Geordie ended that last sentence with a little, nervous laugh; and, adding sternly, "Then you take your life into your own hands," he hurried back to his wagon, where the crowded women and children sat looking fixedly to the northward, as though every moment they expected to see a troop of yellow-streaked, shrieking Indians come whirling over the familiar prairie.

That was the last load of fugitives, and, in spite of her prompt determination, Geordie would have given

worlds to have recalled it when she found herself alone once more, a mere mite in the great, empty land. And yet, under this sudden dread of something — she would not define what, even to herself, — there was a strong belief in her mind that it was all a foolish fright, a stampede which would make the Steeplemix people laugh.

"I don't believe it will frighten mamma much," she said to herself, "only maybe she'll think I'm frightened, and will worry about that. I fancy I see her sitting up in that old cart on the way home, meeting all those folks, and just driving on, smiling as usual, and not frightened at all!"

A sudden vigorous rattling of pans on the kitchen stove reminded Geordie that she wasn't quite alone after all. She quickly stepped in, thinking, "I'll not tell them one word about it," and found Max with an apron tied around his neck, preparing to go through at least the ceremony of getting breakfast.

He greeted her with a sudden wild burst of eloquence.

"Many years ago, in the city of London, there was a poor child who sometimes slept in the open street, his wretched mother having left him, either by accident or design. He lived upon crumbs doled out by the hand of charity, and learned to read by poring

over scraps of an old ledger given to him by one of the clerks in the counting-house in which he finally had become — "

"This is the worst spell you've had for a long time," interrupted Geordie, contemplating Max as though he had just emerged from a severe spasm. "I can't bear *too* much of it to-day, Max."

"My excellent sister," chanted Max, "your cheerfulness tempered with sobriety, your housewifely industry, and above all your frugality, render you the object of universal respect. Indeed, you are the apple of my eye — the crab-apple, I mean."

Max had abruptly dropped the Addisonian style, and, walking up to Geordie, threw his arms around her and whispered, "I heard it, every word, Geordie. I'll tell you how I happened to. It begins on yesterday. Yesterday Karlie and I went out to the barn and made some things to pound with, and then we threshed out that little bit of old wheat, and it made a peck. Then we slipped into the house ever so still — because we wanted to s'prise you, — and got the coffee-mill and took it out there, and then we ground our wheat in it. We ground it through three times, and sifted each time, and after the third grinding it was flour — really flour, Geordie, like the Graham Uncle Roy used to buy. Nannie made us

some little sacks, and we worked letters on 'em with Karlie's old red crayon, and then we put the flour in. They're in the pantry now, those sacks. And I woke up 'most before daylight and hurried down, 'cause I wanted to help you get a real nice breakfast, and then I saw the folks, and you and the man talking, and I heard it. But I guess God can take care of us if he could of David. I asked him to, while you stood out there."

"And of course He *will!*" said Geordie with a cheery kiss on the upturned forehead, and a sudden loving humility in the presence of that frank child-faith. "But don't let us say one word about it to the rest, Maxie. How good you are, dearie, when you aren't naughty!"

Then they brought out those three tiny sacks, and set them on the kitchen table in a row, each one marked, in gorgeously ornamented letters:

PELICAN MILLS XXXX.

EXTRA GRAHAM.

MAX EARLE, *Prop.*

N. E. — *B.M.* K. E. — *Del.*

The "N. E. — B. M." stood for "Nannie Earle, Bag Manufacturer," and "K. E. — Del." for "Karl Earle,

Delineator," and just above the lettering there was a wonderful sheaf of wheat all in vivid scarlet.

"But you just ought to see the flour!" exclaimed Max, when Geordie had sufficiently expressed her admiration of this imposing scene. "Get out your pan of milk, Geordie, and *don't* skim the cream all off this time. I helped auntie make gem cakes once, and I know just how. But I'll let you mix these, and I'll stuff hay in the stove to heat the oven. Takes a furious fire for gems. Look at this flour now, madam!"

It did have a good, rich, wheaty look, that was a a fact, and didn't at all resemble "shorts" or the other coarse, branny stuff they had been using. Mixed with creamy milk, such as only the cows in the Gentian land can give, it looked richer still; and when the smooth, bright batter was at last placed in little tin patty-pans, and set in the oven, such a delicious, nut-like odor began to steal forth out of the generous heat, as made Geordie and Max almost forget the first great sensation of the morning in their mutual triumph.

A hay fire is just the thing for baking gems, and this double-extra-superior product was soon smoking upon the snowy-draped breakfast table, to be eaten with golden butter, sweet and pure as the prairie air.

That they were "really richer than any of auntie's gems" had ever been, was even Geordie's verdict, as she sat with her little troop around the table, and it was unanimously agreed that a letter must be written that very day, telling auntie to get wheat for her own self and grind it and make Graham flour — that is, if she really desired to see some of the very sweetest, lightest and most delicious gems in the whole world. "She needn't put it in the sacks if she doesn't want to — but it's fun to make the sacks," was considerately added.

Geordie was glad they had something pleasant to think about. But *her* eyes were constantly wandering to the far blue line of the prairie, while her mind was haunted with the dread that, after all, perhaps a hideous possibility lurked beyond that calm horizon. Could it be that so many men would leave their homes when there was no shadow of danger? Might there not be some possibility that her father had left uncounted? She remembered now that once Uncle Roy had said "Captain Earle was too brave to have one spark of prudence." These thoughts sent the hot flush to her cheeks, and made her heart beat in great, painful throbs, while she tried to appear calm for the children's sake. After all, it may have been a foolish and wicked pride that kept her here with the

poor little chattering busy-bodies. Once she stepped to the little pantry closet, thinking she would bury those few dear old pieces of silver and papa's precious own china cup, and perhaps stop long enough to hide away some of "mamma's other relics of former grandeur," which were packed forlornly away in the big trunk up-stairs; then she would quickly gather the children together, and take the road for Steeplemix. Certainly the wee ones would be safer hidden in the prairie hollows, than waiting here in this little naked house that stood up against the sky like a target.

But just then the busy-bodies out at their play set up a great hurly-burly of shouting and laughter, and Geordie went to the open door again to look out at the bright, familiar day.

The far-reaching distances of the prairie were still clothed with sunny roofs in their accustomed places, and no bale-fires of ruined homes anywhere reddened the sky.

"If anything was to happen it would have happened by this time," was Geordie's reflection, as she stood there.

At last she turned again to her work, thinking resolutely, "I'll wait!" There was a great basket-full of clothes to be ironed, and Max had twisted hay-knots enough to reach half-way from the box to the ceiling.

Geordie soon had the stove ruddy with heat, and the irons on, covered with an old pan to keep the heat in, the pan having an empty spool fastened in it for a handle. If there is any performance in the world calculated to bring every nerve, energy and power into exercise, that performance may be found in the art of ironing by a hay fire. Any real live prairie girl can testify to that fact. You fairly dance from the stove to the hay-box, from the hay-box to the stove, burn your fingers, set your sleeve on fire, put out the blaze with a wild grasp, dance back to the table, brush the hay-dust from the irons, and iron away for dear life, not stopping for an instant to take breath, or consider for one moment that you are anything but an exceedingly lively machine.

Geordie rather liked this active work, and mentally resolved that day to put her whole soul into it.

You haven't much time for painful forebodings when you iron by a hay fire.

A hurry-skurry of bare feet, and a little voice piping breathlessly, "Somefin' is coming, Geordie Earle!" suddenly caused Geordie to drop the hot iron on the table before her, and stand white and trembling, unable to move hand or foot.

But the next minute Nan's dimpled face looked in triumphantly, and she announced:

"It's a girl, Geordie! a really, really girl, on a horseback! We watched her ever since she was just a speck! Don't let her go by, Geordie!"

"Indeed I'll not!" cried Geordie, rushing to the door. "No 'really' girl can go by here, when we're so hungry for girls."

And, snatching the sunbonnet from Nan's flossy head, she waved it eagerly toward the approaching "girl," who, instead of making the rash attempt to go by, cantered her pony in a brisk, business-like way up to the very doorstep, and, facing Geordie, greeted her with a merry "Hillo!"

A sunburned nose and short black hair, a boyish brown hat with a good, broad brim, a red handkerchief tied around her neck, a knapsack behind her, and a stout cattle-whip over her shoulder, made Geordie think, with a little disappointed shrinking, "I'm afraid it isn't a 'really' girl after all!"

Certainly it wasn't the sort of dainty, fair, chatty little lady her soul longed to behold.

"I've come away up here on purpose to see you," said the visitor, touching her hat with mock-knightly grace, and Geordie's whole heart was won, that very minute. Those words, spoken in the silveriest, clear-cut tones, with the friendly, straight-forward glance of the hazel eyes, were what did it.

"You blessed girl!" she cried. "Of course you are coming in, then!"

And of course she was, springing lightly from her pony to the threshold, leaving the said pony in the enthusiastic arms of the busy-bodies.

"I'm Doc Thatcher — or Dorcas," said this abrupt young lady, "and I'm engaged in the pleasing pastime of herding the Steeplemix cattle this summer. People's cows, you know, have to be driven on the prairie for pasture, and somebody must keep them away from the fenceless crops. But I didn't come up here to tell you *that.* I came to see the girl who couldn't be scared. They told me about you, those folks. I rode up to a wagon to hear what they had to say, and the man — he was the last man — said you was the only family left, and he expected you would all be massa*creed* before noon. I knew you must feel just a little 'creepy' away up here all alone, and Murray promised to stay with the cattle, so I came. We've had a glorious gallop against the good prairie wind, Ann and I. (Ann is my pony, you know.) Sometimes, when I'm out alone for hours and hours, with the wind teasing and patting and buffeting me, just as though it expects I'll meekly stand and take it forever, it's splendid to turn right against it, and defy it, and ride for miles without stopping, as I have to-day."

And the little figure, with its solid shoulders, straightened up in an exultant way, as though it had consciously grown, in the glow and vigor of that defiant ride against the wind.

"Suppose there *had* been any Indians up here?" she was sure that her pony hadn't been raised among the Sioux for nothing; and wouldn't it be fun to troll a party of Indians after her into Steeplemix?

"There's a scouting party on the road," she went on, in her rapid, spontaneous way. "The poor, scared people refuse to be comforted until somebody *goes out to see whether there are any Indians or not!* Isn't that funny? And the scouting party has gone, but it is in a nice, comfortable spring wagon, behind two nice, fat, comfortable old horses, and they have a huge lunch-basket, and some shot-guns, and that fat old Captain Starks is along, taking some gentlemen out to look at land! John Peters acts as scout, because he was here before Steeplemix was built, and Lieut. Totts, with his sword buckled on, is in command of the expedition. Lieut. Totts appears to be in solemn earnest. He belongs to the regular army, you know. Mustn't it be fun?"

But Geordie wasn't particularly interested in the character of Lieut. Totts. The reaction from the loneliness of that long night, and the suspense of this long day, was too much.

"I do believe I'm horribly frightened — I'm so glad you've come!" she managed to say, in a wavering voice, and then hid her face in her hands for one long, unrestrained "cry."

"Don't cry — I mean, yes, *do* cry. *I* would," said Doc, getting up and looking about, as though she would like to finish up that ironing, or take Geordie right into her arms, or do something comforting. "You've been brave — braver than any of those men — brave as the boy that 'stood on the burning deck.' I shouldn't wonder if 'twas mentioned in the papers — the way you've done!"

"O!" said Geordie, looking up with a smile through her tears, "I'm sure mamma wouldn't allow that. I don't think it was bravery. I was so scared about being alone in the night. I can't bear the dark. But I just thought I wasn't going to be carried away from our own house like that, when my father hadn't been afraid to leave us!"

"Dear me!" thought the visitor to herself, "what a queenly little pride we have about 'our own house' and 'our father.' I s'pose most likely it *was* just a little outbreak of family airs, after all. But I don't object to that!"

And presently they were making happy girlish confidences in the frank Western way, which, I suppose,

will only be outgrown when the country has grown old and leisurely, and people are no longer considering life as an "experiment."

"I know I'm not doing 'girl's work,' exactly," Doc told Geordie, "but what better could I do? It doesn't hurt me. I grow more and more like a solid hickory knot every day. I might teach, but then the schools only last two or three months in the summer, and I'd only get eight or ten dollars a month, while now I get fifty, and my work will last till frost comes. And do you know — of course you don't — I've bought a flock of sheep! And I'm learning to spin! Mother teaches me evenings. Father is making us a loom, and we're going to manufacture every thread of our winter dresses. Isn't that just glorious? If we were A. T. Stewart himself we couldn't feel grander. I'd a thousand times rather wear home-made flannel than trashy 'store goods,' and besides, we couldn't even get the 'store-goods.' We're grass-hopper sufferers. But the grass-hoppers can't eat the wool off our sheep, consequently we're independent of *them!*"

"And you needn't put in cheap, ugly reds and blues," said Geordie, with enthusiasm. "You can make nice mixed brown and red; I saw some stuff Tina Oleson's mother sent her from Sweden — such

handsome, good, firm plaids, in fine dark green and black and brown, — all home-made. O! I want to learn! I don't see why spinning isn't as good fun as some of those games. Wouldn't it be jolly to see a whole room full of wheels, all going at once — and so good to hear the huge buzzing!"

"Well, that's *just* what you'll see, if you come down to Steeplemix one of these days," said Doc. "And you'll hear a huge buzzing, too." (Of course it was quite natural that Doc should do all the talking, because she had most to tell, and Geordie was eager to listen.) "All the girls are into it. We're going to open our Y. M. C. A. room with a grand spinning concert. We've got the room down there over Mr. Tosslop's blacksmith shop — it was the only one to be had in Steeplemix. The boys here white-washed the walls till they're as pure as snow, and Harry Tosslop has fixed up three gas jets, and invented a contrivance for making real gas right there in little boxes behind the jets, so we have a beautiful clear light. Harry invented the stove, too, and made it himself, and that stove is just — business. I hope you'll excuse that slang. But Harry *is* a real genius, if he is a blacksmith. Then we girls made a rag-carpet — each one furnishing so many balls — and we sold the carpet and got something for the floor. The

boys made the seats, nice, low, comfortable ones — we stood by most of the time and helped plan them. And Mrs. Tosslop gave us a stand with a nice red cover, and a Bible, and a horrid great engraving of the Deluge to hang up behind it. I always shudder at Deluges. You have to go through the blacksmith shop, and creep around through the old broken wagons and furnaces and anvils and things, to get up-stairs, but we don't mind that much, it's so bright and cheery when you *do* get to the room — all except the Deluge. When the windows are up we can look out at the sky, and the lake, and hear the waves talking, and do you know — I always like to go to a meeting in some little 'upper room'; it makes me think of the disciples, and the Lord, and Paul, and all those old glorious prayer-meetings in little 'upper rooms.' The Steeplemix paper laughs because girls belong to our Y. M. C. A., but we don't care. We let the boys go ahead with everything, so of course it's proper to call it a *Y. M.* At least we let them *think* they're going ahead, it's the only way to get them to do *anything.* But I like boys."

It was quite plain, indeed, that Doc knew far more about boys than Geordie had ever dreamed of knowing. She couldn't help interrupting, to inquire more about that Buzzing, to which subject Doc returned,

"The girls were all going to spin, they had their wheels ready. Mr. Brumbach, the great 'sheep-man' out in the country, had given them the wool all prepared in nice, soft rolls, and they had been practicing at home, ever so long. There was to be an oyster supper, and music, and the spinning. Mr. Brumbach had offered a prize to the girl who could spin the best yarn, and the yarn was to be given away, to make stockings for barefooted grasshopper babies. The first in the audience who made a pun on girls spinning 'street yarn,' was to be summarily expelled."

By-and-by, as the girls sat talking, the pilgrims came trundling along on their way home, having a half-tired, half exhilerated look, as though they'd been to a picnic. The "scouting party" on its return stopped, too, for a drink, and left the startling information that two lone Indians, on their yearly visit to the Pipe-stone Quarry, had been seen twenty-two miles north of Big Shoe Lake, and were as badly scared at the settlers as the settlers were at them.

And at last, just after Doc had mounted her pony and was galloping away home, Mamma Earle returned. She found Geordie radiant, and possessed with the eager hope of going down to Steeplemix to hear that Buzzing, and to be in the very midst of it, for one exultant evening, at least!

CHAPTER III.

DOC'S CHRONICLES.

"NO desk. An inclined plane, except in bed, is my abhorrence. All glorious articles must be written on a dead flat."

That's what Christopher North says in the "Noctes" Miss Paul used to read to us. I've written it at the top of this page by way of self encouragement. When you sit on the ground like a Turk, with your paper on a book in your lap, or lie flat on the grass with your paper just under your chin, you know what it is to write "on a dead flat." Maybe my scribbling will be much flatter than "glorious." But I don't care. I'm obliged to write. If anybody in the world ever hated to keep still and do nothing but think, and

not be making anything or doing anything, — that person is the "undersigned."

I haven't anybody to talk with out here, watching the cattle all day, and I fall into such a whirl of thinking I'm afraid I shall soon be "queer in my mind," like that poor little worked-down Mrs. Tanner said she was, after they all had the fever, "so that it wasn't safe to leave her alone with the children." I've sketched cattle in all sorts of positions, till when I go home at night I keep seeing horns in the air everywhere — even after I've gone to bed I see them, with my eyes shut, just as Billy says he sees corks bobbing, when he's been fishing all day.

Things happen sometimes, but not often.

There was the "Indian scare," and that jolly ride when I went to "call on" Geordie Earle. And there was the day when the grasshoppers came down and clouded the sun, and the cattle ran and bellowed, and I thought of "Dies Iræ" and all sorts of dreadful things.

And I have jolly evenings. The spinning is fascinating, really. And our northland twilights are so long and clear, mother never looks the least bit reproachful when Ann and I go to Steeplemix to call on the girls and help get up things.

But I suppose if I'm lonesome out here, and want

to write an autobiography, there's nobody to object. It isn't any sillier to be doing that than to be all the while getting up confidential little sensations with the girls about one's self. There's Lillie Rose, down at Steeplemix, has three confidential friends! And I just know she makes up things to keep so many people interested in her, or else wears her very heart "on her sleeve," for them to nibble at. I'm sure she isn't going to die very soon, if she has got a "presentiment," and I don't believe there's anybody unkind to her at home. I think it would be a good deal more harmless for her to be putting all those fancies on paper, just for herself to see.

And this isn't going to be merely an autobiography. It'll be just some sociable little "chronicles," with other folks in besides me.

To tell the truth, my work *is* getting to be rather monotonous. I've crammed my mind, to help pass the time away, till the very sight of a printed letter makes me feel sick. My literature has been so—*standard*, too! Shakespeare, and Hallam's Middle Ages (the footnotes of the Ages, mostly—they're quite spicy), and Josephus, and ever so many memoirs out of Jonah Hopkins' library. All remarkable people study Shakespeare when they're young, and I think Shakespeare's splendid!

In the early summer I used to lie in the grass, with my elbows on the big book before me, among the sweet odors of the wild peas, and rich fruity scents of the gold-sprinkled shoe-string flowers, with such a humble, happy consciousness of the great sky above and all around, of the silence, and the wide earth, unmarred by anything to distract one's thoughts.

And here, with the pure, clear horizon visible on every side, Shakespeare's world could fill it all for me with courts and cavalcades and battle-din, and parlor dalliance, a vivid motley host.

"Pick out the story dramas first, Dorrie," Miss Paul said to me, long ago, "and then their deliciousness will tempt you to go in deeper."

(Miss Paul is the only human being who ever sof ened that blunt name of mine in the least.)

And of course I have picked out the story dramas, and they're beautiful to tell to the children at night. But somehow, in these late summer days, not even Perdita, airily weaving her dance-flowers, nor the "Tempest," with its far-off sylvan voices and freshness of woods and waves, can beguile me into forgetfulness of these tail-switching, uneasy Steeplemix cattle, especially when Ann stamps and frets with the flies, and the hot sun pours down upon the prairie, enveloping each living body in heat, like a palpable cloak, till even the birds pant in the grass.

I never knew, till this summer, how human-like animals are. Ann, now. Ann's sorrel forelocks hang down in such a forlorn sort of way over her white eyebrows, that sometimes I braid them, and tie them with cheap little green ribbons. And then you should just see! She makes me think, for all the world, of a girl who used to go to school with me. It seems, then, just as though she ought to be dressed in a faded old figured calico, with a limp figured sun-bonnet wilting over her sorrel braids. I shouldn't be surprised, any day, to hear Ann ask to borrow my slate-pencil, or offer me a bunch of pinks and bachelor's buttons. And my former schoolmate needn't — even if she should ever hear or it — feel ashamed of her resemblance to Ann. Ann may not be handsome, but she is gifted.

And Deacon Withertop's cow! Something in her face and "carriage" made me think, the very first time I beheld her, of one of the ladies in our church in old Shopfield. Every morning, when that large, gentle old cow files out of the cattle-pen with the rest, I think of Sister Smalley's leisurely sweeping lavender silk, and the soft masses of white lace about her neck, and her meek eyes looking reflectively up at the minister. There *must* be a resemblance, else why should I ever have thought of it? Bossy Withertop's

temperament, too, is wonderfully like that of Sister Smalley. It must be that temperament does shape features and give expression; maybe it affects color, too. How I wish moral sweetness could obliterate my freckles!

"News" is the object of my admiration, as well as "Sister Smalley." I don't think News has ever been to a Water Cure, but he certainly is a severely hygienic dog. He takes real honest naps at regular hours, and invariably reclines squarely on his back, with his fore-paws drooping pathetically over his breast, and a most composed expression upon his countenance. He has adopted this posture, of course, to give his lungs free play duriug his slumbers.

If I were a painter and wanted to "learn sky," I'd get a pony and come right out here on the prairie and herd cattle for one whole summer. There's so *much* sky. I've wished, many a time, that I had eyes all around my head, so that I could gaze at all the lovely hues at once.

This morning a blessed little plover hopped on the low roof over my head, and woke me with his two or three lone, liquid notes. And then came the first far pale sun-rise glow, creeping over the edge of the world. And oh! how I watched it, and gloried in it,

as it slowly brightened and widened, till the whole earth lay like a great rolling lawn in a shimmer of golden dew, all sprinkled with little peeping, happy bird-voices in the grass.

I like the rain, too. Yes, the real, steady-going whole-day rains, and even the savage dashes with drops like bullets. It's bliss to creep into the thicket by the lake, in my large, warm "ulster," and hear the rain coming down on the leaves, with the sweet, fresh fragrance of the wet grass all around, and the little birds chirping cosily near by in their nests.

Sometimes black-browed thunderstorms come up to the "edge of the world," and peep and mutter at me like boding witches, then go away again. Sometimes there comes a stillness, when the great world seems to grow larger and lonelier, when the cattle low wistfully and take long prophetic looks at the gathering darkness, and by-and-by, when a sudden soft breath comes hissing straight through the grass, turn their heads from it and instinctively crowd closer together, to wait for the breaking of the storm. Then Ann and I go in a glad gallop before the wind, up to John Tanner's, or away down to the dear home shelter, "hard by" the big blue lake, and near to Steeplemix.

And oh! nobody knows what a comfort it is, after

all, to be helping build that home, with its good, broad roof against the sky! For the sake of that, I can gladly face the wind and the rain, and the hot sun, and the long day's silence.

I do believe nobody else ever hungered for a home as we have. We've always been *almost* getting a home, and always letting it slip right from under our feet. We've had nice neighbors and horrid neighbors, and had a hard time to keep from being horrid ourselves.

And yet, when we knew that we were coming here, and father was to have and to keep this "soldier's claim" of one hundred and sixty acres of good rich ground, and that we were at last to have a steadfast home of our very own — I *wasn't* glad.

It wasn't as *I* had planned, hundreds of times, as I guided my pencil through the angles and curves of those beloved lessons at school. And I wanted more of the drawing lessons. I didn't want to come out here, "away from everybody," to "forget all I knew," and just eat and drink and sleep, and do nothing but the common old kind of hum-drum work.

I've cried, too, often and often, curled up here in the grass, when nobody knew, because I can't help longing sometimes for Miss Paul's lovely lessons, and to be working out the dear old plans.

I had a beautiful long good-bye visit with Miss Paul before we came away from Shopfield. She was the High-school teacher. If Thomas Carlyle could be suited with anybody that isn't an old hero and a sort of a barbarian, *I* think he ought to be suited with Miss Paul. Such a quiet, serene, wise woman; it always seemed as if she took the whole world into her love, with all its littleness and its greatness, its beauty and its pain. When we read history, and it told what mean and horrible things human beings had done, Miss Paul never flared out, and grew angry as we did. She always quietly pointed out every bit of the real wrong that was done, but she never seemed to feel angry at all with the people who did it, but only compassionate and sorry. It seemed as though, looking at the tenderness and sorrow in her sky-blue eyes, we could understand something about God's patience with this tiresome old world. And then, when we read of the noble things, Miss Paul helped us to understand them, with such a serene, heart-deep joy, that this seemed divine in her, too. If we had done wrong, it was always a comfort to tell Miss Paul, not hiding any of the shame or pain. O! I *wish* I could grow to be a woman like that!

"So it is coming at last — the dear home shelter," said Miss Paul, that day, looking at me with the

grave, sweet sunshine in her face. And then she went on, more gaily: "I've been in your bright, breezy north-land. I know all about it. I've had my toes frozen in one of its howling winter hurricanes. I've crossed the "illimitable prairies," and slept all night in a hole dug in the ground. But there, you needn't look so crestfallen. I like that country because it takes work to live there. And work makes people noble, especially when they have an 'own home' for the centre of their labors.

"I've been wishing a great many things lately, particularly since I went to New York in the holidays. I've been wishing that I might go through all the lanes and by-ways, and into the wretched cellars and attics, and tell the ghostly women and children and hopeless men to come out with me into the big broad West to build homes. I wouldn't take just a forlorn car-load of children to scatter lonesomely around — I'd take the fathers and mothers. It seems to me some of the money it takes to build hospitals, and the money it *will* take in years to come, might better be employed in helping people to earn wholesome food, to have wholesome air to breathe, so that their children can grow into human beings such as God wants them to be, and not deformities for people to nurse and shape as best they can into something like

civilized comeliness and strength. I believe in helping people to homesteads before hospitals."

I almost forgot my secret heart-ache while I listened to that long, earnest speech. *I* knew the misery of being homeless, and I never had lived in a great, crowded city, either.

"O, Miss Paul!" I cried, eagerly, "do have somebody get it up!"

But Miss Paul only said, quietly: "Many people are thinking very earnestly about it, dear — and something beautiful may happen — one of these days. And now, Dorrie, what else?"

Miss Paul always seemed to know instinctively when there *was* something else we wanted to talk about.

Without Miss Paul and the High-school, what could I ever do, even now?

There we had drawing every day, beautiful lessons, free to us all, and I had worked so hard to take extra lessons, in order to get along faster, and Miss Paul knew how I loved it, and what hopes I had built on this foundation of daily work. Hopes of a profession thoroughly learned, the industrial decorative branch to come first, and to be to me as the stepping-stone to the higher career. There was a cosy home for us all, in that precious old air-castle of mine; fair raiment for mother, and a full, complete, harmonious

suit of clothes for father. For father was like Bella Wilfer's "cherub pa." Never, in all his weary, harassed, upset life had he known the bliss of a complete suit. And I was to spend my days in happy, happy work among the Bohemians, the busy bookmakers and illustrators! Miss Paul had encouraged me in it, and believed it might come to pass. Hadn't I made an original sketch of her back and shoulders that you would have known meant Miss Paul anywhere in the world? Hadn't I drawn "Ariel" and "Caliban" from my own imagination so that the superintendent recognized them?

"There!" I exclaimed, suddenly choking up, and tossing a roll of my poor little old drawings into her lap, while I bowed my head on her shoulder to hide the hot tears. "I hate them now! I wish I'd never touched a pencil! For now I shall always be wanting to — and I know I can't! I can't learn anything there! I hate my life, I do!"

Miss Paul took the drawings gently into her hands, and said, very quietly: "To be sure, Dorrie, it looks as though you may lose two or three years from your beloved work, and that *is* a hard thing, but, after all, the 'chief end of life' — I know that sounds trite — is to build up a symmetrical character, to be good. The highest aim of true culture is to be good and helpful — Matthew Arnold says so. You know I am

a devoted disciple of Matthew Arnold. And, Dorrie, do cease your indulgence of impetuous little angers and 'hatreds' for persons and things and circumstances, and even your own 'life.' For 'true culture hates hatred' — Matthew Arnold says so."

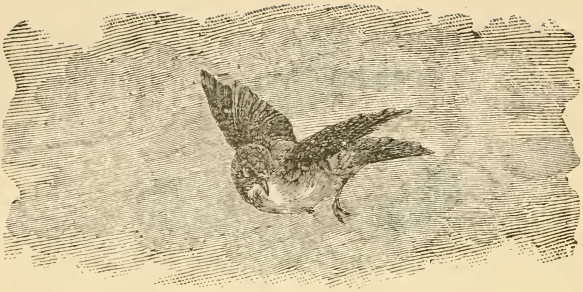
Miss Paul was aware that her frequent quotations from Matthew Arnold made us smile, but she knew they were good for us, notwithstanding. We're so "apt," you know, to think it looks brilliant to be cynical and sceptical and morose — and altogether dreadful. Miss Paul never liked "scenes," and when she saw that we weren't going to have one, because I smiled about "Matthew Arnold," and sat up, and brushed back my hair, she continued, quite gravely:

"I've always had a haunting impression concerning you, Dorrie, even when encouraging your plans, as though God may mean you to serve him single-minded and especially in some manner, *first*, before you have everything your own way. That is so good for us, sometimes. And he may have something nobler for you to do than anything we have planned. His harvests are always white. And remember, Dorrie, the true harvest-time joy isn't all left till the storing-time. It comes right along with the glow of the ripe grain and gleam of the sickles; and the harvesters sing at their work.'

I knew, as I listened, that she only meant God had in store for me some sort of discipline in quiet waiting, in doing plain, hum-drum things, in being always unselfish and loving, and yet, as she spoke, those words sounded to me almost like a solemn "call" such as ministers have. And Miss Paul's idea of "love" was something above the everyday kissing, clinging habit of sentimental girls. *That* she could shame out of her presence with one quiet, cool glance.

Her "love" was something to be manifested in putting others first and above us in the everyday joys and comforts, in quietly accepting inconveniences and making sacrifices. And so I came away, quite happy in the effort to forget self, and work cheerily with the rest for the building of this new home. After all, I felt that my lovely air-castle of a home *had* been ridiculous, because I'd wanted to build it *all myself*, through *my* "talent," "energy," and all that. Miss Paul saw through it all, I'm sure.

The "chronicles" stopped right there, for the simple reason that "Sister Smalley" had wandered into by and forbidden paths, and had led three younger members of the herd a mile away, into John Tanner's buck-wheat.



CHAPTER IV.

THE TANNERS.

NOTWITHSTANDING her placid countenance, "Sister Smalley" seemed to find an unregenerate enjoyment in a luxurious promenade through those odorous waves of white blossoms. Doc was into the saddle in a moment, leaving the "chronicles" safely tucked under a stone in the grass, and had soon overtaken the truant, who leisurely turned about and proceeded back towards the herd, followed by her erring companions.

"O, you know your place perfectly well, don't you?" said Doc, severely, and then she sauntered slowly up to the Tanner residence, which stood just beyond the buckwheat. It was a poor little hut of a

house, with sod walls all overrun with weeds, and trailed over with wild morning-glories peering through a veil of pink tickle-grass, till it looked like some little old deserted fort. Only you don't often find a swarm of bare-headed, bare-footed children around a deserted fort, and here there were at least ten, gathered in one excited bunch to witness the astonishing spectacle of Doc driving "Sister Smalley" out of the buckwheat.

Doc knew the little Tanners; she knew everybody's children.

Mrs. Tanner came to the little, weedy-fringed door with a dejected baby in her arms, and admonished Lycurgus to get out from under that horse's heels.

"Ann never steps on babies," said Doc, "and she's had plenty of chances. I don't think the cows got far enough into the buckwheat to injure it. Are you feeling better in your mind than you did, Mrs Tanner? Do let me take the baby up here!"

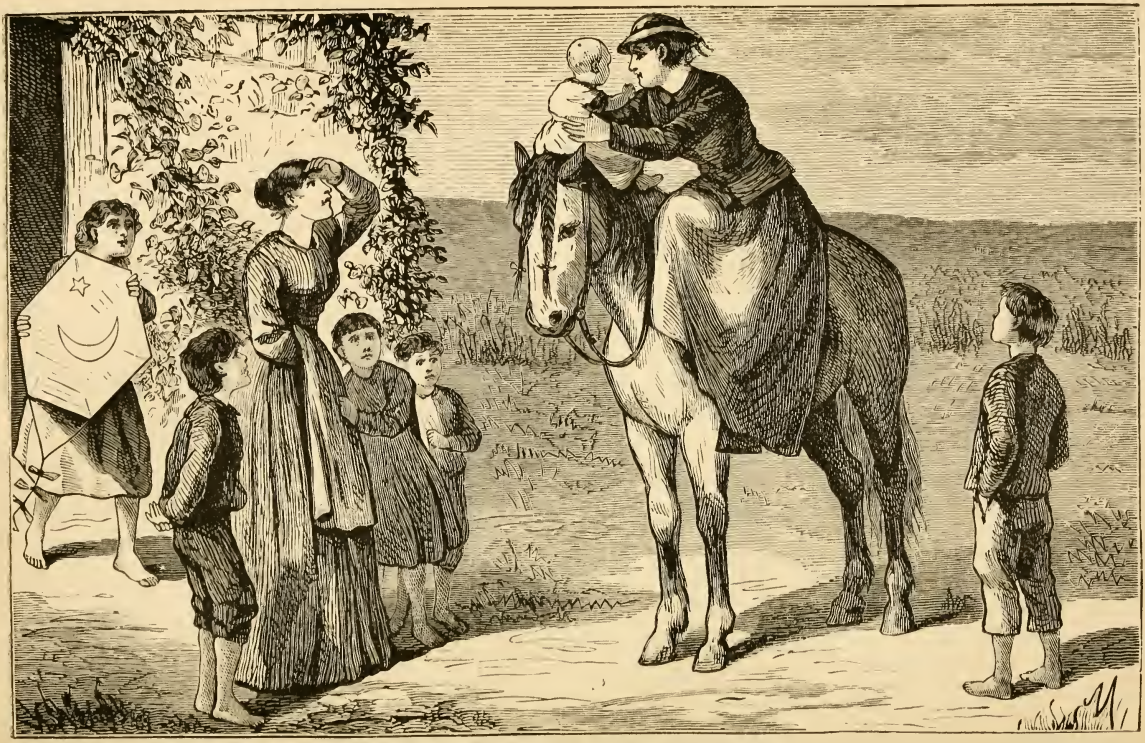
In all Doc's "moving around" she had acquired a pretty extensive acquaintance among babies, and she admired lovely babies, just as you do a white, dimpled statuette, or a clean and happy kitten, but she didn't love babies indiscriminately. It was just a little impulse of the sweet Bible "charity" which moved her to reach out kindly arms to this baby, whose lean

fingers were cold and clammy, and whose bald head looked speckled.

She perched it cheerily before her, between Ann's ears, holding its limp sides firmly under her warm hands, and smiled down sociably at Mrs. Tanner, who didn't seem to know what to do with her empty arms, but finally stood, shading her eyes with those yellow, bruised hands, and said: "I feel a good deal better, lately. Sairy has gone home now, and the children play out-doors a good deal. They ain't been half such a bother since you made them kites. Here, Rosalindy, fetch out your kite to show how nice you've kept it."

Rosalindy fetched it, and held it up with much pride, a large blue kite, ornamented with a huge gilt crescent moon with one attendant star, and having a crisp tail of a multitude of white rustling papers, that gave it a delightfully clean, Saturday-afternoon, freshly-done-up appearance in that squalid place; a real dove of a kite, that Doc had spent a whole afternoon in making.

"They've kep' their kites on the wall in a row, with a sheet over 'em," said Mrs. Tanner. "And every night after lamp-lighting I hev to take the sheet down, so the children can lie in bed an' look at the white an' the glitter. And Lycurgus has lernt the letters on his'n. Spell 'em, Lycurgus."



"She perched it cheerily before her."— Page 60.

Lycurgus proceeded to "spell 'em."

"S O P H I E M A Y."

"We 'lowed 'Sophie May' must be somebody dreadful chirk and bright or you wouldn't have named Lycurgus's kite after her, with all the morning-glories printed round on't."

And Mrs. Tanner stepped closer, with her poor faded face close to Ann's sorrel braids, and said, softly:

"I don't know but what you'll think it's foolish, but last night, when the baby got to sleep, I was a-lookin' at them kites, and somehow I got to thinkin' of old times, and mother's bureau in the spare room, with the white-fringed cloth on top, and the white clovers out by the spare-room door, and the big early stars shining out in the dusk, and me a little girl bringin' the clothes in out of the dew. It's strange now, ain't it, how things will come up? And I got to making up verses while I lay there a-looking at the kites. I always had a fashion of making up verses, but somehow I never got any printed. Rosalindy, bring me that there 'History of Injun Massacrees' off the clock shelf. I just wrote out them verses last night and laid them in that book to keep till you happened to come over. I don't know as the spellin' is just right. You needn't read it till you're gone off alone."

"O, it isn't always in the spelling," said Doc very

gently, and taking the poor little scribbled verses from between those sanguinary pages, "and I'm 'most sure you had the right kind of thoughts for poetry. Is Lycurgus going to school this winter, Mrs. Tanner?"

"Lycurgus can't!" said Mrs. Tanner, almost fiercely, and suddenly reaching up to pull the baby down into her own arms. "Neither can Rosalindy, nor Lurline, nor Alice Griselda. They might if they had clothes, but they can't have decent ones for home; and it takes plenty of warm ones to go with in winter, three miles over this here naked prairie. I shall go crazy with them, too, shut up here, day in and day out. 'Tisn't all grasshoppers' fault, neither. It's first Kansas, then it's Ioway, then Dakota, and Nebraska, and nobody knows where we'll be cleared to, next! John never settles long enough in one place to git me even a woostid dress. And the children are just growing up without any schooling at all!"

Sure enough, what would they do in winter, Doc wondered. It was very well to be proud of the clear, cold, electric atmosphere, when you had plenty of flannels and furs and velvets, and a base-burner, and a cosy room, but it wasn't so exhilarating if you lived in a hut away out on the prairie, and were little, and thinly clad, and didn't dare to face the storms swooping down from the north.

"Don't you worry, Mrs. Tanner," Doc said, cheerily. "There'll be heaps and heaps of the nicest soft yarn spun, one of these evenings, and you shall have enough for baby's stockings, and for all the rest, too. You babies! See Ann pretend to be frightened, now, at that tub on the grass!"

Sure enough, the bright-eyed little pony, coquettishly switching her long tail, and pricking up her ears, stepped daintily close up to the tub, eyed it severely and calmly for about two minutes, and then jumped aside with a sudden huge leap.

"If she could laugh she'd laugh now," said Doc, gayly, not at all disconcerted by the sudden jump. "She does it for nothing in the world but a joke Don't tell me ponies haven't a sense of humor. Here, girlie, I'll take you."

And with a grasp of Lurline's uplifted hands she drew her up behind the saddle, and directing the little one to "hold on tight," started off into a gay canter.

"Lycurgus, Lurline, Alice Griselda, Rosalindy, Ferdinand, Binzadella," murmured Doc, when she had sent Lurline back to her envious brothers and sisters. "I think I know now how some families come to have such names. It's the struggling, yearning family poetry cropping out. It *has* to have a vent some way, so it mostly comes out in the names. It's the longing for *some* sort of beauty and dignity in the

family. But I *should* hate to be shut up with so much poetry all winter. And just to think of the long, lonely, school-less winters away up in Geordie Earle's country, and east, and west, for ever and ever so far!

"Ann, I have got an idea! *It's a circuit, Ann, like a Methodist preacher's!* Am *I* going to stay shut up in one house all winter, do you suppose? Is Geordie Earle? Is Allie Grinager? Just wait till frost comes, if you please, Ann! Then the herding will be over, and that "Buzzing" will take place, *and the circuit will begin!* You'll see!'

CHAPTER V.

THE "REV. JERROLD SHAW."

DOC was making Ann slowly saunter back and forth, up to her knees in the sweet, ripe prairie grass. Ripening without rain, and having had just the faintest early little nip of frost, every blade of that grass shone transparent in the still, soft Septemtember light. Here and there a vivid scarlet leaf of some strong prairie growth blazed out, and occasionally a fairy blade was tipped with emerald, but in spite of these, it seemed to Doc like wading through a little tranquil sea of threaded gold. Talk about autumn woods! You should see the northland

prairies in one of these wonderful, slumbrous moods of September or October, a little before it is quite keen enough in the frosty mornings for the brave blue gentian, and before the wild geese and pelicans have thought of their accustomed flight from the beloved land of sweet air and blue waters and sunny solitudes.

Doc's prairie was the grand kind, with immense sweeping heights, each broad enough for a farm, and with room for farms and farms between. It had a strange dreamy look that day as Doc went riding slowly back and forth through the threaded gold.

A world of pale blue haze lay in the great hollowed spaces, not like a chilly cloud, but tender and warm with the veiled light of the red sun, and, far across, somebody's hay, in ranks of stacks, built of the wild grass, showed delightful brown clear-cut outlines against the pearly atmosphere.

This was the last day of herding, and Doc was glad. But not as one who escapes from a hated and irksome task. Doc had gathered a generous sheaf of beauty-lore from that summer's work. She even gloried in the peerless beauty of this fall day, with a queer subtle feeling of individual ownership in it, as though after the whole summer's loving scrutiny of sky and earth, the fair, out-door world was doing its

best for a good-bye, making "just one more" day of affectionate communion.

But beyond this waited so many delightful possibilities of new work, that Doc's fingers ached to begin. For instance, there was the "circuit." That was what had shaped itself out of Doc's thoughts on that day when she rode away from Mrs. Tanner's, with the poor little halting "poem" in her warm hands. I am not going to write out for you one droll verse of the poor little lines. Doc did smile a little at them herself, but she never once laughed over them with another living soul. She would as quickly have brought out for laughter and criticism some queer little slipper embroidered uncouthly for her by unskilled but affectionate hands. But looking at those verses, the poor, wistful, faded face of Mrs. Tanner, and the hungry faces of the poetically-labeled children, invariably came before her, and that impulsive determination about the "circuit" eagerly and insistently shaped itself in her mind. Then there was the little Steeplemix Y. M. C. A., which the *Pennon* laughed at "because it had girls in it;" Doc had a warm corner in her enthusiastic heart for that. As for the "Spinning," it was to take place on the evening of the very next day, and there was the most inspiring hurly-burly of preparations going on among

the girls already, down at Steeplemix. The spinning and weaving at Doc's own home was getting on famously, too, but there was yet to come one pair of fine soft blankets Doc had set her heart on making.

"I shall have my hands just gloriously full," said Doc to herself, with a happy little laugh, in the midst of her pondering, "I shan't pine away." That last sentence was spoken aloud. It really was. I know people don't usually think aloud, except in parlor dramas, but Doc had really fallen into the habit, being alone so much, you know. And somebody laughed. Now you may not imagine that anybody could come sauntering across the prairie, escaping Doc's observation, until he could hear any exclamation of hers, but it is a fact. You can't look every way at once, and travelers on the prairie have the queerest way of suddenly descending some height and making a bee line towards you, till you, all unconscious, turn and behold a companion, apparently dropped fresh, if not fair, from the mid-heavens.

Doc's unexpected visitor proved to be the "Rev. Jerrold Shaw."

"I couldn't help it," he said, with a polite touch of his hat, "excuse me for laughing. And — will — you — please accept my congratulations?"

He always spoke the first words of a sentence with

a demure, long pause between each utterance, and a pensive scrutiny of the ground at his feet; then the other words crowded each other pell-mell, as though they were afraid some of them might get left.

A good-natured, boyish face, trying very hard to look genial and ministerial at the same time, had the "Rev. Jerrold Shaw;" large, painfully helpless white hands, large feet clad in low shoes, and womanish white stockings.

"O, yes," said Doc, "delighted to have your sympathy. Would you like to know why I feel so encouraged?"

"I would, indeed," was the sincere reply.

"Then tell just how you happen to be meandering about out here, breaking in upon a pensive maiden's reflections in this sort of way?"

"I'm lost," said the Rev. Jerrold, rather sheepishly, as he stood and fingered Ann's sorrel braids. "At least — I — don't think — I'm not quite sure which is the way up to Deacon Carter's place? I wanted to walk, you see. It's capital exercise, you know. They told me the way before I started — but — somehow — don't you think — there is — a sameness which is very misleading?"

Doc looked down compassionately, much as she would upon a child perplexed over a certain little difficulty in its alphabet.

"You were to come out past the cattle-pen," she said, with a short nod for emphasis, "then you were to go round the big slough," (another nod,) "then up the road till you come to Sloan's place, then you cross from there and go to the left till you come to John Snider's claim — the shanty was burnt the other day — and you cross a run on his claim, and go over the west half of Section 21 — that's railroad land, — and Deacon Carter lives on the northeast quarter of the section adjoining. I don't see how you *could* have lost your way when they told you!"

"It did seem strange, but somehow," said the young gentleman, meekly, "when I go on foot, the houses and ground and everything look so different from what they were when I rode. The distances don't look the same. And I get to thinking, 'Now this house certainly ought to have three hay-stacks by it, and a lean-to. Or was it that one yonder?' You never saw such a muddle as I get in."

Now Doc had one vivid fault, among many others. She could not — at least she seldom did — keep her thoughts to herself, even when they might wound, and had no sort of helpfulness, inspiration, or sympathy, in them. If she felt a sudden scorn for some small thing, it was quite likely to be expressed with an emphasis really terrible to a sensitive spirit.

"I hate to see a man or a boy who hasn't got horse sense," she said, looking straight into his frank brown eyes. "I don't mean it for slang when I say 'horse sense.' I mean the sort of sense, or instinct, or unconscious observation, or whatever you call it, that takes people straight where they want to go. I like to see a man that never gets lost, but keeps his eyes and ears open, and *smells* his way, too, if necessary. If you rode out to Deacon Carter's once you have no business to get lost on foot. Will you wait here while I go to bring those stragglers back to the herd?"

It looked absurd for him to stand there, meekly waiting for that girl, after such a rudely-scornful outburst from her, and he keenly felt the absurdity of it, standing there stung and angry, as Doc galloped away. But then, it would be just as absurd to run away. And he *was* lost, and tired, too, and she hadn't told him the way from *here* to Deacon Carter's, after all. Besides, he had a sudden angry impulse to fling into her confidence some things which had restlessly stirred his boyish heart for a long time, unsuspected by any one.

One thing he liked. Doc didn't simper at him. Somehow he felt that it would do to be sincere with her. In fact, that it wouldn't "do" to be any other

way. He could tell her things just as he would to a boy, which is saying a great deal.

"What you said sounded rather harsh," he said, when Doc returned and dismounted, "but it only hurt because it is so true. I suppose you'll think this sounds like a whine, but when I get to thinking about myself, I feel that there's a bitter wrong somewhere. It isn't all my fault that I haven't got 'horse sense' as you call it. And you don't know what a helpless sort of creature I really am. I'm 'grown' like a hot-house plant, and not much of a success. Not so horrible, quite, as one of those children Victor Hugo tells about, raised in a pitcher for a show, but just as useless and as great a deformity. I've been in school ever since I can remember, till that little grasshopper church down in Steeplemix wanted a cheap pastor and got me. I'm merely used as a figure-head. A church always goes down without a figure-head. So I go through the horrible pantomime of a sermon every Sunday, and try to do the correct thing through the week. I *never* wanted to be a 'pastor.' Once I did leave college and went to Chicago and tried reporting for a daily. But I wasn't wicked enough for that. I should have died of 'treating' the policemen, in a year. And the fellows that *could* treat got away with all the news. I had no trade, no

profession, no muscle. Besides, mother was breaking her heart to have me in the ministry. Nervous, weary little body, she thinks 'once in the ministry' she can wash her hands of me. But, sometimes, I don't think I can bear it much longer. Since you are so frank, will you be kind enough to tell me what I'd better do?"

That boy had never looked so manly in Doc's eyes as he did this moment. He made all that long speech without looking at his boots more than twice. He didn't twirl his thumbs. He held his head up and hurled these words at her in a defiant manner, which seemed to mean that since she had begun, unasked, to analyze his character, — let her do it thoroughly now, and 'make it count.' She couldn't say anything worse than he knew of himself.

Doc stood thinking for a moment, with a sudden quailing before his demand that she should tell him "what he had better do."

"I'm sorry I was so rude," she said, gently, "I'm always speaking out so — and disgracing myself. Do please forgive me. But O!" her face lighting up with a new thought, "there *is* something you could do. You'd make a mag-nif-i-cent sign-painter! Now, really, haven't you ever thought of that?"

"I might saw wood for people, or black boots —

and I've thought of drumming for a wholesale house, or selling books on subscription, or running a Cheap John, or — "

"Oh, but I'm in earnest," interrupted Doc, "I'm sure it's an admirable thing to be a good sign-painter, and have an eye for form and color and 'telling effect' — much better than being a heartless preacher. Your lettering on those mottoes you gave us for the Y. M. C. A. was superb. And just think of Lillie Rose's spinning-wheel! the way you've painted it in white and scarlet and gold — it's exquisite! You could finish off carriages splendidly! I believe that's just what you were born for."

The idea of anybody being providentially predestined, born and mysteriously guided through life up to the distinguished avocation of a sign and carriage painter, struck Jerrold as being rather droll, but she had spoken with such friendly honesty, without a shade of sarcasm, that he couldn't help feeling really cheered and encouraged, after all.

"I always did love brushes and paint and colors and tracery, that's a fact," he said, heartily, "and just in the way you mean, too. Not landscapes or that sort of thing at all. And see here, comrade, I mean to go back to Steeplemix and put an end to the whole miserable sham business. I can't preach.

I'm tired of books. I *will* do what I was 'born to do,' if it isn't anything but sign-painting."

And hadn't he, in his gladness and earnestness, with a sudden queer inspiration, hit upon just the right word for Doc? After all, there was a gracious store of ready sympathy waiting beneath her relentless candor. "Comrade!" It is just such a spirit of sweet, sincere and unswerving friendship as this, between girl and boy, and man and woman, which is going to make the world sunnier and wiser one of these days.

"Before you go you've to guess what I'm going to do to keep me from pining away," said Doc, as, leading Ann she walked slowly back and forth at his side, through the transparent grass. But who could guess what unheard-of thing Doc might undertake to do? Certainly not Jerrold. And a week ago Doc would have preferred dragging by wild horses to making any confidences with him whatever. She liked boys, but they must be of the human, capable sort of boys, like Harry Tosslop, or her brother Billy, and above all they must be sincere.

"I'm going to try riding a circuit, like a Methodist preacher," she said, "only my 'tracts' will be drawing-lessons and spelling-books. I've talked to motherkin about it. I tell you, motherkin is the jol-

liest little mother in the world. She always goes into my whims, heart and soul. Just think of the children out on the prairie, shut up for ever so many long winters, without any school, or study, or regular teaching whatever, and getting so they *can't* study, and growing up all dwarfed and snarled up, right in the eager 'kindergarten time,' when they ought to be thinking and seeing and doing as fast as they can, every blessed minute. It'll be years before they *can* have schools up here on the cold, treeless, grasshoppered prairie, and then all these little folks will be past saving — saving for worthy citizens, I mean, unless somebody steps in right *now* to help. I've thought about the way those girls did in 'Sybaris,' till I'm crazy to begin. I can help a little, surely. You see, one day I can spend with the Tanners, and help them ever and ever so much. Then, next day, Ann and I will go up to Carter's — I know Mrs. Carter'll be glad; she's sick, and can't teach her bright little boys, even if she had time. I'll stay a day there. Then I'll go over to Harkwright's, and so on. Nobody need be ashamed of the bare table for me. I can fare on potatoes and bitter tea as well as they. And maybe the other girls will help — don't you think so? It'll be worlds better than crochetting by the fire all winter."

"You've got a tinge of it," said Doc's companion, stopping and speaking with energy as he looked at her glowing face.

"Got what?" questioned Doc, in wonder.

"Some of the real Sweetness — Matthew Arnold's sort, you know. The 'impulse toward action, help and beneficence.' I never had it. Maybe I could have borne my work if I had. I believe I don't care a fig whether those children out there are growing up properly or not. You'll find it's precious few of those girls who can be coaxed to care. The fact is, some people are born with a good share of that Sweetness. Some must *get* it somehow or go without. Matthew Arnold hasn't told us how to get it."

"I believe you've met my Miss Paul somewhere — she's been trying to teach you," said Doc.

"Never knew Miss Paul," declared Jerrold. "I tell you I'm a *school-ling*. Don't know anything about our real good women except in books, and one or two of them on the platform. You'll stand by me, of course, when I throw up the 'pastorate?'"

"Of course," said Doc. "But you'd better go on up to Deacon Carter's, if they expect you. You can see his house from those stacks yonder."

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE "SPINNING ROOMS."

A LITTLE silent restful minute had come over the "spinning rooms," with the afternoon sun shining brightly through the west windows upon the greenery and color and gleam, all blended and arranged like a lovely picture by eager fingers. Somehow everybody seemed to have been spirited away all of a sudden. Only Doc and Lib Randolph sat on the floor in a little scattering wilderness of arbor-vitæ and bitter-sweet berries, fastening the closing letters on a splendid great motto for the east wall. The girls had worked hardest, but all Steeplemix had "had a hand" in this room for its gala night. There

were three churches in Steeplemix, and three societies that hadn't any churches, and between them all the poor ministers were having a most uncomfortable time. They started a revival, but before it was half "over" somebody began to count up the "converts," and guess which church they would go to, and the Rev. A. A. Baxter called on the Rev. E. E. Small, privately, to decide the matter, and then the other churches heard of that, and, O dear! it was a most bewildering time! Only Jerrold Shaw, the poor boy "figure-head,' was glad when the revival was over, because he couldn't speak extemporaneously. So it came to pass that, when the boys and girls all at once decided to have a Y. M. C. A., the Steeplemix heart went out to it in a real motherly, brotherly way, out of sheer desperation.

Mr. Tosslop gave it a room, and Jesse Bumbach, the Bitter Valley stage-driver, gave it ten dollars out of his own pocket. The brakemen on the railroad took it under "their wing" too. And now the whole town had gone into a happy furor over the funny "Y. M. C. A. Spinning." The parlors of Steeplemix were scoured for the loveliest pictures, brackets, mirrors, and house-plants. Nothing was too good to give. Even Flossie Day's piano had a splendid, stately corner.

The Y. M. C. A.'s own carpet lay warm and cosy upon the floor, the most tasteful one of ingrain that Flossie Day could find in all St. Paul, and what Floss Day couldn't find in St. Paul wasn't worth finding. Then there were easy chairs made of — what? Barrels! Not the horrible old-fashioned kind, with curved backs, fit for instruments of the old Inquisition. But upholstered in the cunningest modern way, with soft wadding and bright ingrain, or reps, and having real "turned legs," and rollers.

These belonged to the room, every one. So did a bevy of cosey little satellites, in the shape of cushioned ottomans and foot-stools. But the spinning-wheels were the pride of every heart. Four of the loveliest spinning wheels that ever hummed; fit for princesses, indeed. One snow-white, one green and gold, and one — Lillie Rose's — brown and white and scarlet and gold. And for each wheel there was a great willow basket heaped up and running over with snow-white rolls of soft wool.

And all day long, while the girls worked here, Harry Tosslop's stove kept the room so cosily warm that even the tea-rose buds opened, and everything seemed summery and sweet with the fairy fragrance. But this room was not all. Harry had coaxed his father to let him move the goods out of the carriage-shop

down to the clean large shop below, just for two or three days. The boys all lent a hand, and the girls, too, for that matter, till now this room had two apartments, one an old-fashioned room with two brown, old-fashioned spinning wheels in it, and a fire-place, and a corner cupboard, and an old-fashioned clock. There were ever so many funny black profile portraits strung around the walls, each one the queerest likeness of somebody in Steeplemix, dressed in old-fashioned costume, and all kept a profound secret from every one but Harry and Lib Randolph and Flossie Day — and Doc! Besides, there was a blessed "piney" quilt in a frame. The fire-place was a sham one, but you could get real hasty pudding from the pot on the crane, and eat it with milk or maple molasses from the corner cup-board. You could even get a spare-rib from the fire-place if you came early enough, both the pudding and the spare-rib coming in some mysterious way from a cooking-stove behind the partition. Then there was a store of pumpkin and mince pies, and splendid baked beans, and baked apples and cream in the cup-board "for the children's pieces;" and if you didn't like to be classed among the "children" you could be supplied with some of Steeplemix's daintiest cake, and hot oysters and coffee from the modern stove.

Of course, only old-fashioned girls were to spin in the old-fashioned room; and over all Lib Randolph was to preside as the old-fashioned housewife.

The parlor spinning was to be done in bright, trim costumes; and it was to be proved, of course, how charming a modern girl could appear, spinning yarn for comfortable household goods.

Why, the enthusiasm about this spinning had spread all over the county, till the girls really anxiously considered whether the house would be safe to hold such a crowd. Mr. Snedeker, the great "sheep man," had heard of it, and sent all these baskets of wool, besides offering a prize of five dollars to the girl who could spin six pounds of yarn in the shortest time. He was a plain sort of a home-body among men, and remarked quietly as he sent up the wool:

"It's a good thing. Set the girls to spinning. Then the little ones can always have warm toes — and not so many cases of dipthery. Cotton stockings is what makes dipthery."

"I do believe that's Doctor Nelson," said Doc, looking up from the big spray-ey "D" in her lap, as ponderous footfalls came up the outside stairs and lighter ones came tripping after.

The next minute the doctor's good-natured face peered in over his fur muffler, and then the doctor

stood back gallantly to let some one else in. And that some one was Geordie Earle, rosy and beaming from her long ride in to-day's keen wind.

"I've brought *my* contribution," said the doctor and disappeared.

Doc dropped her work pell-mell, and jumping up grasped both Geordie's mittened hands with:

"You dear Geordie Earle! I was just getting the deepest kind of blues. I thought you was going to miss it, after all. Doctor Nelson is *so* absent-minded he was just as likely to forget you as any other way. Wasn't it delightful in him to go and have a case up your way! He gave you the note, of course."

"Not he," said Geordie. "He forgot and wrapped powders in it, he said; but he guessed I was the girl you wanted and I thought I'd venture. We sang 'Glory and Love to the Men of Old,' all the way down here."

"Oh, then," laughed Doc, "you're a girl after the Doctor's own heart. And mine, too," she added, as Geordie emerged from her wrappings.

Doc always fell in love with lovely girls, and Geordie was lovely in spite of that little faded poplin dress which looked, somehow, quite too "young" for her slim figure. In fact, it had required a good deal of courage after all, for Geordie to come down here

in the poor little poplin, to be pitied as a "grass-hopper girl." The village folks, Geordie knew, were little acquainted by experience with the hardships people were enduring out on the bleak prairies. But the singing and the "music talk" with good, genial and music-loving Dr. Nelson had brought a happy glow to Geordie's cheeks. And here was a piano, with its precious white keys glistening in the afternoon light. Geordie instinctively turned the soft blonde ruffles back from her dimpled wrists, in the little fashion unconsciously caught long ago from her own music teacher, and walked straight to the seat before those keys.

"Do let me," she said, looking back at the girls with comical pleading, "I'll play very softly; and my piano's been gone — oh, such a long, long time."

"Go ahead!" said Lib Randolph, then — jumping up suddenly, "Girls, there's the afternoon freight. I'll bet Lil Rose hasn't come; she never *does* come till the last minute. She *said* she'd come on the freight so we could rehearse once more. And I *want* to sing that duet. I'm going down to the station to see. See here, Geordie Earle, if she doesn't come couldn't *you* sing her part?"

Of course such a thing was out of the question, as Geordie quietly assured her. But Doc looked in sur-

prise upon the gentleness, the quietude, of Geordie's manner in refusing that rude request. Not a bit supercilious or "grown-up," yet with a kind of unconscious stirring within, a little panoply of ladyhood and reserve. Lib went down stairs with a bang and a whirl, in a general sweep and confusion of her shabby flounces and cheap lace.

"Now," said Doc, answering the questioning in Geordie's eyes, "I'm not responsible for her, you know, dear. She belongs to the Bethany church choir, indeed she does, Geordie. You'll be surprised to hear her rich alto. So they're glad to get her, if she does talk slang and eat peanuts in church. She's into all the socials and concerts and everything."

"I hope Lillie Rose will come," said Geordie.

"No telling," said Doc, "she always does this. Always has to be sent for, and coaxed and hurried up at the last minute, and have a huge fuss made over her, to get her to do anything at all. She thinks some of the boys will dance around and find a way to get her here. But they won't this time. They all took a solemn vow in the beginning; they never said what it was, but we know. You see, Lil's teaching in the Gaston village school out on the branch railroad. She could come in as well as not; she comes home every Friday night."

Lib returned in a few minutes, alone and in a state bordering on fury, apparently, at least.

"Here she's sent a note," shrieked Lib, "just think of it! One of those sickly sentimental notes she's *always* getting up! Says 'the clouds are gathering round her and she cannot sing. Oh, did I know the bitter aching of her lonely heart, I would surely surely forgive.' That's Lil Rose, all out! It's just to put me in a stew; it's to get up a sensation. She means to get here, somehow."

"Of course she does," chimed in Doc with sympathetic indignation, "and of course she shall. But not one of those boys shall go, even if they would; I'll bring her myself!"

"I *should* like to know how," remarked Lib. "*I* can't go. I'm to read."

"Of course you are," said Doc, "but *you'll* go, Geordie? On the hand-car, you know. My brother Billy works at the station, and we've had splendid rides on the hand-car. There's a sail on it exactly like the one on our boat; and do see, the wind is just in the right direction to send us straight to Gaston!"

"Will your brother go?" asked Geordie. "I'm afraid to go with just you, Doc. Are you sure it would be all right?"

Doc was perfectly sure, and hurried away to hunt

up some extra wrappings and to "interview" Billy on the subject.

The previous night had taken away all the slumberous, golden beauty of the prairie. A cold rain, then a clear sky and bitter air, had bleached the grass to a pale dead brown, and set the strong stems in the sloughs rattling in the north-west wind; and the initial movement of the martial fall fires had begun on this bright keen afternoon. Far across the steely waves of the tossing lake the low sun sent a long level road of light upon the naked wide world, and away there, in the wintry radiance, the leaping flames held a wild, ruddy gala. Geordie waited, enjoying the pleasant atmosphere of the bright room, while she looked out at that windy picture of flame and light, till Doc returned triumphant, her arms full of warm wrappings.

"Billy says it's all right," she declared. "Billy isn't afraid to trust me. Mother isn't; you needn't be. You shall sit wrapped up like a little Esquimaux princess. And just think how splendidly we can see the fires!"

And, as she spoke, she deftly arranged Geordie's wrappings around her without waiting for a remonstrance; and a tinge of Doc's blithe delight in "outdoor-ness" came over Geordie too, as they ran down

stairs and walked with quick harmonious steps toward the station. Down among the lumber stacks they went, over side tracks, right "under the nose" of "Goliah," the pony engine. And over at the end of the little depot building stood Doc's car. Billy waited beside it, wearing a wintry blizzard cap, knit jacket, and overalls. He had grimy hands and grimy face, but Billy was a gentleman in spite of that; with the real knightly gentleness which is one manifestation of that "sweetness" which is to reorganize the world, beginning with the boys.

"I've made a warm nest of buffalo robes for you," he said, as the girls sprang lightly to the platform; "you'll have a glorious ride. I'd like to go myself, on any other errand. Here goes your sail. Good evening, ladies."

And with Doc standing up exultantly, while Geordie sat like a little muffled princess at her feet, the car sped away in the yellow light like a bird with dizzy speed before the driving wind.

Billy looked after them a moment with a boy's admiration of speed and courage, then went away to his work. That evening, in the early dusk, as Billy was preparing to go home to supper he noticed, all of a sudden, that the wind had gone down.

"Guess they'll have to pull to get into Gaston, may

"The car sped away in the yellow light."— Page 90.

be," he thought; "they went out at a fearful speed, though. Somehow I rather wish I hadn't let her try it to-night; but Doc's always so *sure* about every thing!"

Soon the night was everywhere weird with intense tints of gold and black, and strange, shifting, ruddy shadows, and lights up-reaching from some awful outer space in which the world hung dark and lone. The crescent moon and evening star burned large and red above dense masses of lowering clouds; the smokes from distant fires stretched up at intervals from the black encircling horizon, showing with sombre magnificence against the cool clear blue of the sky, like immense, curled, ruddy flames. Most beautiful of all, the lake lay motionless and bright in the midst of black shores, with the long line of fires marching across far away heights reflected in its bosom, like the near light of burning cities.

CHAPTER VII.

TO GASTON.

"DOC, I'm afraid!"

They had just glided swiftly over a long stretch of trestle-work spanning the wide space between two heights of the rolling prairie. Poor Geordie had shivered under her "princess" robes as she looked down, down through the dusk, scarcely daring move hand or foot. What if some train should suddenly shoot round the curve just yonder and overtake them here? There was a new awfulness, too, in the wide expanse of earth and sky, it seemed to Geordie, sitting on that diminutive platform and pushed along with it at headlong speed, as if she

were part and parcel of the uncanny thing, with its goblin, whirling levers and great white sail.

"It is wrong, O, it is very wrong!" cried Geordie, piteously, when they were well beyond the trestle-work, and she had found breath to speak. "Why didn't we stop to think? I *never* did such a thing before! Doc, did you ask Billy *all* about the trains?"

"Why, no," said Doc; "I know all about the trains. No use to ask Billy. Besides, I was in such a hurry" — she was going to add, "for Billy might have taken it into his head that we ought not to go," but prudently refrained from any such encouragement of Geordie's doubts. She concluded: "We needn't be afraid just because it's growing dark, Geordie. I *never* was one bit afraid of the dark."

Evidently not. She stood erect and jubilant, with the wind folding her heavy garments about her in a funny, fitful way, as if "trying the effect" for some rugged little statuesque design.

"I'll tell you what that carnival of fire away out there makes me think of," she said, presently, without looking down at her listener. "It's this:

'Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.'

I like to repeat that good strong line out here in this grand wind. Look, Geordie, away off there, at the

'ringing plains,' the red battle fires, the deserts of black gloom! Geordie Earle, I do believe you're mad!"

Doc didn't mean insane. She meant just what school-girls always mean when they say "mad." It seemed as though Doc lived two lives, a mental life which had in it a kind of dignity and beauty gathered from the books she liked and the work she loved best; the other a crude, mean, every-day life, marred with small rudenesses, occasional slang, and little unconscious family idioms in her speech — "jungle blood" asserting itself, perhaps, and not restrained by Doc as it certainly ought to have been.

There was, in fact, an expression of dignity, a peculiar, cool kind of dignity, beginning to peer out of Geordie's swathing of hoods, shawls and nubias. To be sure, all you could see of her face was from her delicate eye-brows to her dimpled chin, but that was quite sufficient to give some idea of Geordie's "inner consciousness" just then. It *was* a clear case of "madness;" a sort of melancholy, "I'm-in-for-it" expression of royalty victimized and made to do an absurd thing, against all the promptings ot its intelligent soul. Besides, the certainty that her mother would never approve of this performance also began to afflict Geordie's tender conscience. "Mamma

Earle" never liked girls to do anything startling. "Self-reliance," she said, "should never be made obtrusive."

Even if you were a newspaper correspondent, and delighted to ride on locomotives, yea, on the very cow-catchers, down mountain railroads, and could write in the most charming manner about your sensations, Mrs. Earle would have quietly curled her lip at the story, and serenely resolved that *her* daughters should cultivate their faculties in some less adventurous manner.

Poor "Mamma Earle!" Struggling so bravely in the midst of her bitter poverty to keep up the old traditions and inborn instincts of "deportment," and personal elegance, and lovely, tranquil living.

And now here was her Geordie — who had not seen a piano for long, long months, and might have been at this moment having a lovely time almost to herself before those blessed glittering keys up in that bright Y. M. C. A. parlor, while other people were doing up their back hair, or eating paltry suppers.

"I never could quote poetry," said Geordie, with the "maddest" little toss of that royal muffled head, "and I never did anything on the impulse of the moment that I wasn't sorry for afterwards — at least I haven't many times. If that Lillie Rose of yours

wants to stay out there and pout I'm sure it's really no affair of ours. At least, some of those boys might have been persuaded to go, I should think. Mamma thinks ladies should never do anything — anything extraordinary."

"Well, *you* never will, dear, so she needn't worry," said Doc, looking down with a motherly expression of countenance which was unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, lost to the offended princess. "I'm doing this, you know. But I did think you'd enjoy it, Geordie. Why, I thought you'd remember it with pleasure for years! I'm sure I shall. I think it's glorious. Besides, our boys had made up their minds. Not one of 'em would budge. Do — we — want our programmes broken up for contrariness? We *must* have that "Echo Song!" Why, it makes you fairly love Lib Randolph for about ten minutes. While it lasts you don't care a cent for the way she eats peanuts in church, and writes notes to the boys, and chews up the ones they write to her. Same way with Lil. I always like to have something make me forget how I hate some folks!"

"I don't hate anybody," said Geordie, with the serenest self-congratulation in the even tones of her silvery voice. "I never did. It is very vulgar to hate people."

"O, yes, I know," said Doc, "only *please* don't lecture, Geordie. Isn't that just a little bit 'vulgar,' too?"

A few moments of interesting silence followed this period of the conversation, broken presently by Geordie's surprised exclamation:

"Why, there's another railroad branching off there!"

"Yes," said Doc, "we've just passed the 'Junction.' Only that's the same road you saw going on to Hatterville. We're on the new branch road now, that goes clear out into Dacota. Isn't your father at work away out at the end of this very road?"

"Why, yes," spoke up Geordie, "only I suppose it's much as forty miles from here. I wouldn't mind this ride, seems to me, if we were going to father. Doc, how *do* you find out about the railroads and everything?"

"Read the newspapers," said Doc, "and listen to the boys. I like railroad talk. I know where all the new railroads are and where new ones are going to be."

"Well, please don't take me on all of them tonight, Doc," begged Geordie. Then there was a little laugh and the social atmosphere brightened encouragingly.

Some of the fires were marching now almost par-

allel with the railroad, which was everywhere prudently protected by its long fire-break of furrows, not only guarding the track but the long rows of young trees planted by the company. The dry prairie grass had been lighted in every direction, making a jubilee of fire sure to be disastrous to every careless farmer. Sometimes, ploughed fields reached quite up to the firebreak extending along the railroad, and these held upon their secure precincts stacks of the good prairie hay, or, sometimes, some poor little ricks of grasshopper-gnawed grain, "waiting for the threshers" to come around. Geordie and Doc came presently within full view of three stacks set unaccountably on the very edge of a ploughed field, with one side of the row exposed to the hungry fires whenever they should meet it in their march.

"Do you see those stacks?" cried Geordie. "The fires are rushing right towards them! Doc, they're going to burn. Isn't that a shame!"

"The man that owns 'em has a sublime trust in Providence," said Doc. "One stack is wheat, I know by the way it's built. They did save some wheat down here in Belle Plaine township. I don't see what he ever stuck those stacks out there for. It's too bad for his babies to starve on account of his stupidity, whoever he is. Geordie, I'm going to stop

this car. We can run over there and start a back fire and save those stacks. It won't take long, and I've got some matches."

"Matches!" said Geordie, "and cigars?"

"I *always* carry matches. Like to, somehow. Everybody ought to do it when they're going somewhere," returned Doc, outwardly ignoring the cigar question but inwardly experiencing a little indignation with regard to it.

"Come, Geordie, you and I can do it as well as not. Lots of women and girls light fires. I'll cheerfully give my old jacket to beat it with, though I grieve to lose its jolly pockets. My beaver coat and shawl will keep me warm enough; and here's Billy's old coat providentially left here under these robes. We can take that to fight fire with, too."

Geordie's impulses were struggling against her prudence again, inspired by Doc's eager, decided utterances. As Billy had said, Doc was always so "sure" it carried people into her way of thinking in spite of themselves, when prompt action was demanded.

"I've fought fire, too," said Geordie, thoughtfully. "I fought it away from our little grove of maples. It didn't seem half so terrible there as it does here. But I think mamma, herself'd say this ought to be done; and father, too."

The car was quickly stopped by Doc's expert hands, and, having hurriedly divested themselves of their heaviest wrappings, the girls ran across the fire-break and the wide stretch of ploughing to the threatened stacks.

"You take my jacket," said Doc, "and I'll take Billy's. We must both beat it for dear life. You fight to the right and I'll fight to the left. Here it goes! Hurrah!"

And the match, deftly struck on Doc's little boot-toe, quickly sent a tiny line of flame nibbling up the dead grass to the right and to the left, three or four feet in front of the stacks. It could creep slowly against the wind but was not allowed by the girls to run before it, as that would have carried the fire straight into the stacks. Whenever it put its eager little tongues out in the wrong direction, the girls pounded it out with those old jackets. They desired this "back fire" they had started to creep several yards through the grass against the wind, leaving the ground black and naked, an effectual barrier against the head-fires coming with such fury across the prairie.

It was hard and dangerous work, for the grass had grown luxuriantly and the flames were running more rapidly every minute, with the fierce wind fanning

"It was hard and dangerous work."—Page 100.

them and sending their hot breath into the girls' very faces as they pounded away with those old jackets, every nerve excited, every muscle in exercise.

Geordie's knees were trembling and her head throbbing, when at last they had fought the fire away from the exposed side of the stacks and stood breathlessly surveying the strip of black ground. In a few moments the head fires had gone grandly marching by leaving the stacks safe, and the girls hurried back to the car.

"*That* was what I call a good deed," said Doc, when they had reached the car and dropped down among the robes to rest and regain their breath.

"Are you *very* tired, Geordie? Why, child, you're shivering! Here, I'm going to put my big beaver coat on you; I'll not need it. I can tie my shawl on Gretchen fashion; I like to wear it that way because it leaves my arms free. No, don't say a word! It *was* splendid of you to come along and help me Geordie!"

"I'm glad it's done," said Geordie, in the midst of her sudden shivering, "but wrapping me up isn't the thing to do. I mustn't sit still like this, neither must you, Doc. My hands are cruelly blistered. Oh, I wish we could go right home!"

"I *would* go back, Geordie, to please you, now

that's the truth," said Doc, "only it's farther to go back than it is to go on. We can go on to Gaston and get a good cup of tea at Lil's house, and you'll be nicely rested, and can rest 'most all the way coming home. Isn't that best now?

Geordie looked wistfully toward the two or three twinkling lights which Doc assured her "meant Gaston," and decided that it was best to go on.

"O! O! Geordie Earle! the wind's gone down," cried Doc suddenly, springing to her feet. "Therefore, Geordie Earle, we've got to run this car into Gaston without any help from the sail. That's what we've got for stopping, I suppose; but I don't care. The fire *would* have got into those stacks!"

"I thought it was growing pleasanter, somehow," said Geordie. "I didn't like shooting along that witchy way."

The cheerful thought of soon alighting upon safe, solid ground had lent Geordie fresh strength, and both working with a will they soon ran into the little, silent Gaston station, where a boy about the age of Doc's brother, Billy, came out of a house near by to see and hear what the unexpected clatter meant.

"Good evening, Jimmy Reid," said Doc cheerily, handing him a book from one of her numerous pockets. "We've come out after Lillie Rose. She's

boarding over at Dinkworthy's, isn't she? And here's that 'Practical Mechanic's' book Billy borrowed of you. I'm glad he and Harry Tosslop have got done sitting up nights over it. Why don't you boys get up a Mechanics' Club?"

"Sho!" said the boy. "We ain't no time for writing Contributions and palaverin' 'round. I lend Billy my books and papers, and he lends me his'n. Once in a while we get together and just have a Boss talk. That suits *us*. How's your Spinning?"

"Our Spinning is just grand, and 'palavering' has done it," declared Doc. "Three wagon loads of folks came up this afternoon from Rushgrow. Everybody's going; the rooms look lovely. We expect to make enough to furnish our reading-table with something fresh all the time, and have hot coffee, and bread and butter (and prayer-meetings at noon in winter time,) for hungry folks from the country. We'll keep plants up there, too, and we're going to have a cabinet of natural curiosities for folks to look at and bring things to. Oh, it's just unutterable, Jimmy Reid!"

"What's unutterable for *you* must be immense," said Jimmy Reid.

"I'm always forgetting things I oughtn't to forget," mourned Doc, as Jimmy helped her unknown and

well-wrapped companion alight from the car. "The name of my companion in affliction is Miss Geordie Earle, Jimmy. We've been fighting fires to-night."

"Good girls!" said Jimmy, politely lifting his hat. "S'pose you've saved 'Lias Long's stacks for him. 'Tisn't every slack old farmer that has guardian angels sent right in the nick of time."

"We'll take you back with us, Jimmy," said Doc. "Of course you want to go?"

"I rather think I *will*," said Jimmy, with a nod and tone of voice the expression of which Doc felt to be just a trifle peculiar. But it was "all right," she knew. Jimmy was Billy's "crony," and "good as gold." Perhaps Billy had slipped some message into that book — but then, Jimmy hadn't had time to see it, and she mentally "guessed Billy wasn't afraid to trust her." She *could* take those two girls safely to Steeplemix, if they would only help when she needed them, and not be "nervous."

"I'll be on hand," said Jimmy. "You hurry over to Dinkworthy's after Lil. Make her come, too, since you've had so much trouble."

Doc and Geordie, after a short, brisk walk, arrived at the Dinkworthy domicile and were ushered in at the little "storm door" by Lillie Rose herself, — Lillie Rose, looking by no means oppressed by any sort of

mysterious mental gloom, but rosy and dimpled and graceful, in her nicest cashmere and daintiest lace bib, this costume being the outlay of three months' earnings in the district school. Lillie was pretty, everybody knew that, in spite of the fact that she had no eyebrows to speak of, and that her receding chin was all dimple, — in fact, a suspiciously weak-minded chin. Her voice was sweet, but it had too much of a head-tone. She never could repeat:

"Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy,"

nor anything else, as Doc did, with such hearty, rich tones, clear, clean enunciation, and evident enjoyment of the vocal utterance.

"I hope we'll do, Lil," said Doc, humbly, after introducing her friend Geordie. "There wasn't anybody else to do it. Somehow those boys never acted so contrary. Even Mr. Shaw didn't offer. Indeed, now I think of it, he hasn't set foot in those rooms to-day. He's busy thinking about something. Geordie and I thought t'would be such a splendid ride, so *we* came — on the hand-car. We've got to start back in twenty minutes, Lil."

"I told you somebody'd come," put in blunt Mrs. Dinkworthy, entering the room just then. "Wasn't a mite of use in worryin'. It jest sets my teeth on edge to see a girl's fidgets when she's fixed to Go. And

here's Miss Rose been a-punishin' to Go for the last hour, all rigged up in her tie-back, and not able to set down a minute. Goin' back alone, you girls?"

"O, no," said Geordie, "Jimmy Reid is going with us. I'm so glad! It's dreadful to be on that hand-car."

"Boys *is* contrary critters!" was Mrs. Dinkworthy's rejoinder, in a tone of astonishment. "I see Jimmy Reid not more'n twenty minutes ago carryin' a fork of hay over to Jingleses barn, and I hollered to him, if he couldn't get Miss Rose to Steeplemix somehow, and he hollered back 'he couldn't nohow. He had somethin' he was 'bliged to do at home. I do hate to see a body disappointed when they 'low to go anywhere."

The pink in Lillie's cheeks deepened a little, but she looked up from some soft salmon-and-white netting in her hands and said sweetly:

"This is just like you, Doc, always thinking of everybody. But would it really put anybody out very much if I didn't come? You know I'd rather go, of course, than do that. And yet I don't feel right for music. If you girls only knew!"

"O, come, Lil," said Doc, "you're the main spoke — almost. And you know Lib depends on her singing to make her way and *be* somebody. And there's

that gorgeous wheel, and Gracie Wolf says spinning shows off your figure finely. Do get your wrappings. And where's some water? We've been fighting fires down here by the road."

"Should think so!" put in Mrs. Dinkworthy again. "I've been a-wonderin' how your faces come all blacked up so. Here! jest come out here to the kitchen sink. I reckon you won't mind the smell of supper cookin'? I'll set you down to supper when you've washed, and not wait for the men-folks."

And this good woman began stuffing her big kitchen stove with bunches from the hay-pile behind it, till it fairly quaked and roared, and set the pots to steaming in the most promising manner.

"I reckon them's Lias Long's stacks you fit the fire from," she remarked as she busily hurried to and fro. "*I* told 'Lias the other day, he'd better be a ploughin' furrows 'round them stacks than off goose-hunting every day, even if he is expectin' the threshers 'round every minit. But 'Lias is one of them kind that lays it all to the grass-hoppers. I'm glad you saved 'em, though, on account of her and the children."

With clean hands and face, and a pair of Lil's shining cuffs instead of her own blackened and torn wrist ruffles, Geordie sat down with Lil and Doc to

the simple supper of savory prairie chicken, baked potato, good cream biscuits and fragrant tea, feeling that there was some pleasure in life after all; and if her conscience was not quite clear concerning this excursion, she had the "experience" which was worth something.

"I'm thankful to say," remarked Mrs. Dinkworthy as she poured her bountiful cups of tea, "that we're better off than most folks on the prairie, if we don't set much of a table. Our farm was liter'ly scraped clean, but we just come up here when they were buildin' the new road and went to boardin' railroad hands. 'Course everybody couldn't be a boardin railroad hands."

Supper was hastily swallowed, and Lillie Rose and Geordie helped each other wrap with little lady-like touches, while Doc buttoned on her coat in a brisk, soldierly way, which certainly meant "action" if not "beneficence."

Jimmy was waiting by the car when the girls returned, looking trim and jaunty in his best overcoat and scarf and carrying a little glittering lantern.

"I thought I'd like to look in at the 'Spinning' awhile," said Jimmy, suddenly remembering his recent colloquy with Mrs. Dinkworthy. "And besides you might need me to take a hand on this here car."

"O, thank you," said Geordie, earnestly. "It will be a great deal pleasanter," and she sank down beside Lillie Rose among the cushions Billy had provided, thinking gratefully that now she could take some comfort looking out at the picturesque night.

"Goin' to have sharp nights now," said Jimmy as he and Doc vigorously started the car. "I guess fall's set in all of a sudden. Shouldn't wonder if we had a spell of square winter. Only yesterday we had what I call a Boss day, warm and sunny and still, with the grass all gold and the sky sort o' bewitched."

"Jimmy," laughed Lillie's soft voice, "weather is one of your strong points."

"I know it," said the good-natured Jimmy. "I've watched the sky pretty faithful ever since I's a little feller all stiffened up with the rheumatism from the scarlet fever. Did you ever try tippin' your head way one side and lookin' to see how the sky-colors look?"

"No, I didn't," said Lil, with gently sarcastic emphasis.

"Well," Jimmy continued, "it's wonderful how you feel the color that way. You ain't a seein' the ground, or noticin' the shapes of the clouds, or conscious of anything but just that great shifting mass of glorious color."

Jimmy always did speak rather loudly, and now he was haranguing those girls like an old-fashioned exhorter, in order to make himself heard above the clatter of the car. And Doc answered just as loudly:

"I've tried it, Jimmy! I really have! It *is* beautiful!"

It was not a very long distance from Gaston to Steeplemix. Just before they came to the long trestle work which had been such a terror to Geordie, the wind suddenly sprang up with vigor, in a moment, as it often does on the prairie.

"Good!" said Jimmy. "That's what I call accommodating. We'll go ahead, now. I'm going to put up the sail. The wind has shifted to the west."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPINNING BEE.

THE wind did spring up presently, just as it often does on the prairie after a time of complete stillness, and it came straight from the west just as Jimmy had hoped it would.

"That's what I call accommodating," said Jimmy, as Doc held the lantern while he raised the sail. "We're all right now, for sure. We would have been anyway, if you hadn't stopped to fight fire. Next time you come out on the road, don't stop to fight fire from 'Lias Long's stacks nor anybody else's. That's my advice."

The sail raised once more, Doc grew jubilant again.

"Look, Geordie!" she cried, joyously, "in ten minutes we'll be across the trestle-work."

"And run into Steeplemix in fifteen," added Jimmy.

The fifteen minutes were passed in silence. When, at last, they came into the little Steeplemix station Billy was there, waiting at the side track, fairly pale with suspense and anxiety.

Billy was a little, strong, "stubby" fellow, no taller than Doc, and small for his age. But it was generally admitted that, like Charles Reade's heroines, Billy had a terrific habit of suddenly growing "several inches taller" when he experienced a little wholesome indignation. Some folks thought this phenomenon consisted simply in Billy's manner of arching his eyebrows, and Doc had a theory that he did it by very gradually and imperceptibly rising on tiptoe "a purpose," in order to make a sensation. But one thing is certain, Billy never bullied; he could make his very gentleness an awful reproof.

"I thought you'd come, old boy," he said very quietly, but giving Jimmy's hand a good strong old-fashioned shake. "It was my fault letting those girls go off alone on such a trip. But I'm pretty well punished, waiting and watching here. What have you been doing, Doc? The Hatterville train is due here in twelve minutes. You'd have been in a pretty fix caught out there on the trestle-work, don't you think so?"

"I — never — meant — to — be caught on the tres-

tle-work,' said Doc, slowly, a dreadful consciousness of Billy's big-brotherhood suddenly oppressing her. "It would have been all right — Jimmy said so — if we hadn't stopped to fight the fires; and I couldn't bear to see a whole stack of wheat burnt up, and — and — neither could Geordie. Seems to me nobody approves of me to-night," added Doc, desperately choking back a sob that wasn't a bit "strong-minded," and trying to laugh.

"Oh, dear!" whispered Geordie with a shudder, "I *knew* there was something to be afraid of. Seemed to me I could hear some great train thundering along after us every minute."

"Well, I'm sure it wouldn't have been such a dreadful thing," said Lillie's calm voice. "I don't dread death the least bit. It's all the same to me."

Jimmy and Billy exchanged a quick amused glance, which was unobserved by the author of these astonishing remarks, but said nothing. Doc spoke out, her patience utterly gone:

"How *can* you be always talking like that, Lil? What *does* ail you? Is it too much Ladies' magazines, dime novels, or what?"

"Come now," said Jimmy, "we've had enough of this, haven't we? It's all right. We've had a Boss time. Nobody hurt. Can't we wait for the train? I'd like to see Brunson."

They all went upon the platform and stood waiting for the train, the head-light of which shone near at hand. Presently it came in; the engine stopped just in front of the quiet little group, and the engineer leaped out with a cordial reply to Jimmy's greeting.

"And Brunson," said Billy, after Jimmy had delivered somebody's short message, "here's some folks just got in off the road — out alone, those girls! Jimmy brought 'em back all safe, though. Nice to know isn't it? Just ahead of you they run, Brunson."

"I thought there was something up," said Brunson, his swarthy face turning grey. "I've had an extraordinary, powerful, asking sort of feeling ever since we pulled out of Groversburg. A feeling as if the Lord was 'specially near, an' I ought to be asking his particular care for somebody. I always *ask* when that happens, and He never fails. There, Billy, you take these printed Texts and scatter 'em 'mong the section hands. Don't you shirk. They're texts I had printed, myself, in Hatterville. Texts that have hit *me.* And ask Tim Reese how he's getting along with that bad word that slips out so. I ain't forgetting Tim. You tell him that, and the Lord'll fetch him through."

Eagerly and rapidly the man had spoken, as though

his droll little sentences were messages that meant life or death. Then he turned to his task as though his whole soul was centered in that alone; for, whatever Johnny Brunson did, he did with all his might. The bell clanged and the train moved out, every soul in it safe in the hands of that "praying engineer."

For this was the name, by which, far and wide Johnny Brunson was known — the "praying engineer." A man whose life was pure, head cool, and nerves steady; who drank no liquor, used no tobacco, never uttered an unseemly or profane word, and never shrank from any duty. This was the "praying engineer," loved with enthusiasm, and trusted implicitly, from one end of that long western road to the other; a rough but loving minister, whose parish was only compassed by the boundaries of a state. "The "wickedest man on the road," declared that he "always felt safe on Johnny Brunson's train."

"Hurrah for Johnny Brunson!" said Doc, as the train moved out, quite forgetting her own recent folly, fool-hardiness, or whatever you may call it, in her admiration for his vivid faith and earnestness.

"Why he *lives* with the Lord right there on that old engine," she went on as they all turned away to go up to the "Spinning." "And he remembers the boys and girls, and everybody all along the road, just

as if he was a Sunday-school teacher and all of 'em belonged to his class and made a burden on his heart, such as sister Brown says she has, on account of *us.*"

An air of cheerful expectancy pervaded the bright, crowded Spinning Rooms when the belated party arrived. The gifted "orchestra" of Steeplemix was playing in the most delightful manner to keep everybody in good humor; and it did keep them so. For, bitter sectarians though they were, the good Steeplemix people were light-hearted enough to adore the sonorous bass viol and to dote upon the child-like piccolo.

Dr. Gibson, too, had been at the piano, singing Steeplemix's favorite songs in his deep dramatic bass. Harry Tosslop's gas-jets illuminated the room with cheerful brilliance, and even the "Deluge" looked less dreadful from that bower of greenery, with a jolly chromo just above it and a "Roger's Group" on a bracket under it.

Best of all, the rooms were crowded with nice, good-natured people, including all the Steeplemix ministers looking as happy as could be, and two bright little girls from St. Paul.

The small impromptu dressing-room was jammed with a hubbub of girls, having a general expression of agony over the few miuutes' delay occasioned by those belated spinners.

"Oh, they've been pouring in awful," said one, in a half-jubilant, half-agonized whisper, as Doc and Lillie Rose edged their way in, having left Geordie in a pleasant, chatty corner among the "outsiders." "This house isn't going to half hold 'em! Isn't it delightful? It's going to *pay!*"

"We wanted Harry to begin it, but he wouldn't," said another. "He said we'd got to wait till Doc got here; and the orchestra's played one tune over three times now, waiting for you!"

"Well, if it's Doc's programme, I'd like to know what *she* thinks of Gracie Wood," put in an accusing voice. "We were all going to dress as we always did, and she hasn't. She's all fixed up for some foreign thing or other."

And the little fair-haired culprit was suddenly pushed forward, arrayed quaintly in bodice and peasant skirt, with beads and a cross, and a pretty cap.

"But I'm the 'blind spinner,' you know, Doc," she said, looking up with her lovely St. Cecilia face, "and auntie just happened to think it would make a nice little tableau.

'And still, and glad, and blind, I wait.'

Just a little blind Bohemian spinner resting in the sun, with forehead upturned to the light, and patient

folded hands, sitting by her wheel. Auntie said that was it, and the costumes would make it prettier."

"Yes, it's a precious little spinner with its upturned forehead, so it is," said Lib Randolph, stopping her "gum" chewing to make this facetious remark.

"It's just as sweet as ever it can be," said Doc, emphatically with an affectionate arm around the little "blind spinner." "I *think* 'H. H.' means the kind of Spinners Shakspeare meant; one of

> 'The spinners and the knitters in the sun that weave their thread with bones.'

But, never mind. *Our* little spinner'll make the prettiest tableau sitting by her wheel."

"Well, do let's plunge into it somehow," somebody else shuddered out, pushing along to the little mirror. "Those St. Paul girls are just sitting there thinking what a gingerbready affair it's going to be. Look through the crack of this door here, and see if they ain't."

Then there was a general rush to the said aperture, and a formidable cluster of bright eyes scanning those innocent maidens who were strangers in the land, and not in the least supercilious; but just as amiable as girls could be, only wishing, in their "heart of heart" that *they* had a chance to dive in there where that delightful, whispery hubbub was going on.

Doc, herself, didn't "peep," I am glad to say, but contented herself with a defiant shake of her short black hair as she said, severely:

"I guess they wish they had Dr. Gibson's bass up at St. Paul, for their choirs and reunions and things; and they can't ever get up finer recitations than Gracie Wood's; and Mrs. Day's cream cake can't be beat, nor the coffee we make. Who's afraid of St. Paul girls?"

"Steeplemix is just as nice as St. Paul, and it's only been built two years; and Steeplemix folks are just as smart, too, if it isn't as big," said Floss Day, mixing her sentences sadly, but gallantly defending the menaced honor of Steeplemix.

"There's *your* girl, Doc, getting introduced to 'em now," said Lib Randolph in a hoarse whisper, and giving Doc's shoulder a rough shake to make her look. "She's a stuck-up thing. *I* can tell. She puts on lots of airs for a grasshopper sufferer, in that skimpy old poplin thing. Well, I'm glad you made Lil come. I just want to show 'em."

Geordie was the "grasshopper sufferer" whom she meant, of course, although she seemed as far as possible from "suffering" just then, even if her dress was a faded old poplin, and that, the very best in Geordie's whole wardrobe.

After all, Geordie had a great many bright things to look back upon; happy happenings which had helped to make her life seem wider than that of most little girls; experiences which made her self-forgetful, and bright, and eager in her talk with other people who had been so fortunate as to have "experiences" also.

One of these "happenings," had been a splendid, long journey with a beloved "auntie," from Cincinnati clear to San Francisco, accompanying a dear friend of hers who was going to Japan, to teach. That journey had been like a swift gliding through wonder-land to the eager little girl. Its scenes and experiences were always coming up vividly at the least suggestion, and flashed out in Geordie's talk like sunshine, after all these long months of loneliness in the Gentian Land. And just now, Doc heard her saying:

"Yes, and we saw the mountains late in the fall, not green and lawny like I always thought mountains were, with little white tumbling torrents, and here and there a great snowy cone glittering up against the blue — but just rising up, gray, and vast, and awful, out of the naked desert — "the abomination of desolation," auntie called it. But I want to tell you" — speaking fast and eagerly — "one Sabbath evening

the train had to stop at a little rude station in the mountains in the dusk. And there was a piano, and somebody playing 'All the world shall worship Thee.' Oh, we sat just as still! everybody in the whole car. And the night gathered on the mountains while the train waited; and the player went on ever so softly, and it seemed as though there was some mighty Wing brooding over us while we listened. Most everybody bowed their heads. It was the sweetest, solemnest Sabbath evening service, and it just *happened*."

Then one of the strangers said something with responsive face, and a little white eloquent hand accompanying her speech with pretty gestures. And Geordie responded with the same unconscious enthusiasm:

"But, after all, the thing I loved best about the great canyons was the little human road winding along at the foot of those giant rocks. Auntie and Miss Lorne kept watching 'the grandeur, the grandeur!' everywhere. But I didn't care for the grandeur. I just loved that little road and rested my eyes with it, and sympathized with it, and wanted to stop where it stopped, and get acquainted with all the little houses and huts it knew. And I almost cried when I lost sight of it."

Here Geordie laughed at the thought of her own babyishness about the "little road."

Doc only heard here and there a little sentence by chance, listening meanwhile, to Harry Tosslop's hurried explanations about something or other; but what she did hear sent a shade of dreariness over her; a feeling of separateness and disappointment. Geordie *wasn't* "her girl," as Lib Randolph had called her, she said sadly to herself. The narrowness and bleakness of Doc's life were matters-of-fact. It had always been so. No doubt, Geordie would sometime be looking back at these days with a laugh, as though they were merely picturesque shadows. After all, Geordie was born for the zest, and sparkle, and ease, and leisure of life, and Doc wasn't, and they would always be individually different — "and, O dear, dear! I'm croaking to myself just like Lil Rose's croaks about nothing," thought Doc in well-defined words, her ponderings before having been very swift and vague. "I suppose I shall be just what I make up my mind to be, if I try, and Geordie needn't care for me if she doesn't want to," she said, bravely, to herself.

It did not take long to fulfil the little programme which was to precede the Supper and the Spinning, when once the "Solemnities," as Lib Randolph called them had begun.

Flossie Day played a grand overture on the piano,

and Gracie Wood, the quaint little "Blind Spinner," recited "H. H's" lovely poem to, O, the stillest audience, just such as always listened to Gracie's delicious voice. Billy Thatcher made an extemporaneous speech (carefully committed to memory) about the aims of the Y. M. C. A., and the work there was to do, and received immense applause. And the "Echo Song" was a triumph. Lib Randolph's voice never sounded richer, in spite of the fact that she had industriously chewed gum that whole evening.

"Now then!" said Doc, when the preliminaries were all finished and everybody seemed perfectly happy, particularly the door-keeper whose hat and pockets were just gloriously crammed, "we've got 'em settled and in good order to watch the Spinning, as they *wouldn't* have been, if we hadn't had a 'programme.' And you'll see if the Spinning doesn't pay best of all!"

Doc was speaking to Harry Tosslop in the old-fashioned kitchen. She busily braided her hair into two funny little tails as she spoke, tying them together with a green ribbon, such as she had used for "Ann's" sorrel braids. Then she drew on over her short gray dress and polonaise, a long, childish, blue-and-white calico apron, with a draw-string at the neck, and straight full sleeves gathered at the waist.

"I'm to wait on the 'children,' you know," she said.

"And ought to be called 'Dolly'," added Harry, thinking how busy, and good-natured, and quaint she looked in the childish little dress.

Then the old-fashioned kitchen was opened, and all through those merry rooms the Spinning began. The people were fairly packed and wedged around next the walls, to make room for the throng of gay, glittering wheels. And then that Buzzing began, simultaneously; the biggest, deepest, most sonorous, and happy Buzzing that ever had been heard in Steeplemix.

They kept perfect time spinning, six great painted wheels going at once, in each room, just filling the air with a whirl of glitter and color, while the girls moved back and forth in their graceful slim dresses, with even step and true hands; and the boys in the Steeplemix orchestra were so overcome that — they couldn't help it, — they began twanging away at those old guitars and violins out of sheer delight "making time" for the Spinners, who didn't need any such help. And if there is anybody in this world who doesn't think that little regiment of Spinners marching back and forth was not a pretty sight, let him, or her, or "them" get up one and see.

After the Grand Spinning Chorus was over, everybody was invited to indulge in the exquisite pastime, at so much a "Spin."

Gracie Wood filled the responsible position of Spinning-mistress, and soon found her blue-and-white china sugar-bowl filled to over-flowing with small change, paid for Lessons and Trials. For everybody, young and old, boys and girls, pleased mothers and waggish fathers, "wanted a hand in it," and declared it to be the jolliest game of the season.

"I declare, now, it does my old eyes good," said Grandma Wood from her undisturbed corner. "Our girls never looked handsomer, did they, Mr. Shaw?"

Grandma Wood always persisted in addressing the "Rev. Jerrold Shaw" as if he had a calm, patriarchal interest in "our girls;" meaning in the dear old lady's parlance, all the girls of Steeplemix. To think that this crude, mentally "distraught" boy should be called the "pastor" of Grandma Wood! Jerrold Shaw's thumbs had never twirled so industriously, nor his tongue stammered in such a distressing way as they did to-night.

The old-fashioned kitchen, with its old-fashioned spinning-wheels and bountiful old-fashioned cupboard was by no means neglected. In fact it was magnificently crowded. Doc helped the "children" to gen-

erous lunches for a "slight consideration," and the Y. M. C. A. boys were kept hard at work serving oysters, and cake, and coffee.

But what attracted everybody in this room was the array of profile portraits hung thickly around the walls; funny silhouette pictures, each hitting off in an absurdly faithful way somebody's "individuality."

There was the large, waggish, good-natured nose, which everybody knew, both in silhouette and out of it; the intellectual nose which kept a "flour and feed" store; the little pert milliner-ial nose which could wheedle you into buying every old dowdy thing you didn't want; noses, in fact, of every variety and expression. Chins, also, came out with horrible distinctness; stubborn, melting, cherubic, sarcastic. And in ears the artist's genius seemed to have particularly luxuriated. These appeared, of course, in silhouette, but not profile, pictures. Indeed, one of the most striking productions in the whole gallery was a back view of a bald head, affording a vivid object-lesson in phrenology, and revealing the ample outlines of a pair of large, lean, expressive ears. Standing collars and high combs, also, "came out strong."

The room resounded with laughter as one after another of the Steeplemix "Notables" were seized

and led in to gaze upon their own loveliness; the different portraits, meanwhile, being rapidly sold off at auction.

"I'm tired of spinning, and Floss Day's taken my place," said little Gracie Wood at Doc's elbow, by and by.

"All right," said Doc. "You never saw such a demand for pumpkin pie, Gracie, especially from the Rush-growers."

But Gracie's mind was little interested in the business part of the entertainment. So, while Doc was mentally calculating how many "Gospel Songs" this immense sale of pumpkin pies was going to buy, "besides a whole box of mottoes and papers which could never have been paid for any other way," Gracie went on chatting affectionately:

"So I thought I'd come out and visit with you, Doc. Dear *me*, Doc! why do you always wear some odd, homely dress when you fix up for things? You ought to wear red, the trumpet color, — I mean in the evening when your eyes shine so and the bigger the hubbub the better you like it."

Doc's face was radiant.

"They knew every one of those portraits, Gracie," she said in a low tone, not thinking of Gracie's suggestions in the least. "One man says the artist has

a 'Satanic genius.' I guess he wants to talk big. It's fun anyhow."

"*Did* you make them, Doc?" inquired Gracie.

"My child," said Doc, gravely, "you should never ask questions. You might grow up to be a newspaper reporter."

"I don't care if I do," returned Gracie. "That's what my auntie is, — a regular short-hander. But have you noticed Lib Randolph? Oh, — she's — acting the awfulest," — and Gracie clasped her hands and rolled up her brown eyes with an expression of horror, — "singing out loud when nobody asks her, and whistling, and calling Dr. Gibson an 'old boy,' and saying things purpose for those St. Paul girls to hear, when she hasn't been introduced, and —"

"I know it," said Doc, "but *we* can't help it, Gracie. It makes her worse when any of us notice her. Nobody'll hold *us* responsible. I hope — did you hear what that man just said? He said 'the person that drawed them likenesses ort to be sent to Rome.' Just as if Rome was a place of punishment."

"Well, — I don't — think you — he — she — it, I mean, ought to have made the back of the *Eagle* editor's head like that," stammered Gracie.

"Why, it's like it, isn't it?" demanded Doc.

"It's too like; it's too bad," said Gracie. "All

those funny stubborn-looking bumps and those wide awake ears, — anybody'd know 'twas the *Eagle* editor, and he'll be sure to say something dreadful next week."

Somebody called Gracie just then, and Jimmy Reid seized the opportunity for a "little visit," too, having waited patiently about for several minutes. Little time had Doc to-night for morbid questionings concerning her own life, as compared with Geordie's or anybody else's life; but she was always ready to hear of other people's hopes and plans, and even of their discouragements. And Jimmy began telling her, — just as so many people, and especially boys, seemed to like to do, — about himself and his plans.

"*I'm* studying drawing," he said, as a fresh burst of laughter pealed out over those portraits. "Did Billy tell you of that? I earned some money trapping last winter, and what didn't go for flour for our folks went for some books I'd set my heart on. I felt condemned for spending any money so when the folks had really nothing to make 'em comfortable. And yet it seemed as though I couldn't give it up. Felt just as if my life depended on them books; and so I sent and got 'em. One is on free-hand drawing, and begins at the very bottom. I have to be saving of paper, so I draw on the freight boxes that stop at

our station. They're first-rate for lessons in chalk and charcoal. I reckon some folks think that's the free-est kind of drawing — "

"Why, Jimmy Reid," interrupted Doc with eagerness, "I never did hear of that. If I should suddenly meet my own grandmother I couldn't feel gladder. *I draw, Jimmy!*"

"Course, I know that," said Jimmy. "Haven't I got a box full of cows' heads you've made, and geometrical figures, and a beautiful chandelier, all designed out of your own head?"

"Well, if you have," said Doc with much dignity, "that's Billy Thatcher's doings, and I never gave him leave. I wanted those cows' heads to put into a cattle-show picture, sometime. But, never mind. What are you learning to draw *for*, Jimmy?"

"Carving," replied Jimmy. "I can handle tools, first-rate, and I like to work in wood; like the perfume and grain and shine of it. It's sweeter'n roses to me. But I can't make the things I want to make. That's been a sort of agony to me long enough; for I jest got to thinkin' that if I could learn to draw 'em out first, and get my eyes and fingers sort o' trained together, then I could make the things I want to make."

"So you can," said Doc, with her quick sympathy.

"A contest between Lillie Rose and Doc."— Page 133.

"You stick to it, Jimmy."

"I mean to," said Jimmy with a nod, as he walked away.

"I'll make Jimmy use *my* books," she said to herself, thinking sadly of the dear old-time lessons under Miss Paul's grave kind eyes. "Maybe Jimmy can do something beautiful with them. And maybe *my* time will come, too, if I just keep on doing the work that lies nearest, with all my might.

'And still, and glad, and blind, I wait.'

I wish I could always *feel* like that, no matter how busy I am in the midst of the hurly-burly."

The last, greatest, and most exciting event of the evening now transpired; and this was nothing less than a grand Spinning Match, a contest between Lillie Rose and Doc, in her every day dress, with the trim little pocketed polonaise. Lillie was a fine spinner and looked elegant, but Doc won the prize just as everybody knew she would, and immediately turned it over to the beloved Y. M. C. A. coffers.

Then everybody crowded around the heaps and heaps of nice yarn, and the fastest knitters volunteered to carry it home and have it all knit in an incredibly short time, into cunning warm stockings for the little naked feet out in the desolate country.

All this was delightful; but, somehow, Doc was be-

set by a good many gloomy minutes during the last hour, just as other people happen to be quite often. I don't think it was Geordie's fault; because Doc had been so very very busy, and had left her to "have just as nice times as ever she could, to make up for lost time." And yet, Doc stood a little apart, as the evening wore on, and the crowd was thinning out, and "best friends" were lingering to have a quiet chat; and she thought:

"Of course Geordie thinks they're a great deal pleasanter, — and she blames me about the ride we took, and I *am* always dressed up in some dull, odd, gray thing, as Gracie said, as if I *wanted* to be odd, when I don't, I don't! And she doesn't care to come and talk with me at all; and yet I am the one that found her out. Well, I don't care. I think *they're* flimsy."

It was a good thing for these bitter thoughts of Doc's to be interrupted. And they were interrupted by Jerrold Shaw, standing before her with eyes downcast in the old, sham, demure way, hands clasped, and thumbs twirling.

"I want to speak to you," he said, and as Doc nodded expectantly, he went on. "I want to say — that — I hope you'll forget what we were speaking about yesterday. It was all a whim of mine, of course

Please don't speak of it to any one. I don't think I could do it. It would be a very unexpected thing, you know; and everybody would talk, you know. So I think I'll go on as I am."

Could he have been in earnest yesterday? Whether he had been or had not, Doc was indignant now, and all the more, because of the consciousness that she really hadn't any responsibility concerning him, and ought not to care.

"But you can't preach, not to amount to anything, you know," she said slowly, looking at him with sorrowful, steadfast eyes, "and I've been so sorry for you because you couldn't, and — and — so is everybody. There, I didn't mean to say *that.* But I don't see how you dare try to fill that place if what you said yesterday is true. Never mind, though. Don't worry the least bit. *I'll* never speak of it. Only — please — *don't* let Lil Rose take her crocheting to prayer-meeting any more. It makes me feel creepy!"

"Creepy," you see, was quite a comprehensive term in Doc's vocabulary. It might mean nervousness, such as Geordie always experienced in the dark; or a little quiver of impatience from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, such as Doc always endured in the agonies of dress-fitting, when she declared that she *would* "take chloroform the very next

time;" or, as in this case, she was intensely "creepy" when somebody shocked her sense of religious propriety and did absurd, "flimsy" things.

Jerrold Shaw didn't stop to analyze Doc's original phrases, of course. He thanked her, bowed and sauntered away, promising with a laugh, to look after Lillie Rose's wanderings.

"I'd hate to have Billy or Jimmy grow up like that," Doc sternly reflected, as she looked after his retreating figure. "But, dear me, *I* oughtn't to be scolding people, I've enough to scold myself for. How do you speak to your own blessed mother, sometimes, you Doc Thatcher? How? Haven't you made her cry? You know you have; and you needn't be calling other people 'flimsy.' It isn't flimsy to be gentle."

All at once, in the midst of Doc's ponderings, came some sweet, wise, old words that Miss Paul had written in large letters upon the school-room blackboard, long ago:

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world and none of them are without signification. Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me."

Not a bitter word or contemptuous for the "barba-

rian," Doc remembered with a sudden meekness; we are only to see what a sad and pitiable thing it is when we can be so blind and deaf to each other, so shut out from mutual sympathy and inspiration. But none of the voices are without signification. No, not one. And a thrill went over Doc, with the vague consciousness that the voices must mean the outward expressions of the world's Life — of nations, sometimes, of social movements, of individuals. Not only a rapt voice crying in the wilderness, but the expression of Doc's own little life, of Geordie's, of Lib Randolph's and Jerrold Shaw's, and everybody's. A world of voices; some making remote, gracious cloister-harmonies together; some peeping like hungry lost little chickens in the grass; some piteously wailing to deaf human ears; but every one having its own signification to the true heart of God.

"And we're all just a room-full of barbarians here, since not one of us understands the other," said Doc to herself with a quiet smile, looking back at the happy little chatting groups. "I wonder when Miss Paul wrote that, if she guessed *I* should ever be thinking of it away out here. Oh, Miss Paul, Miss Paul, if I were only near you!"

Just then Doc observed one of the ministers standing, hat in hand, near the door with a sort of porten-

tous look on his face as though he was going to make a presentation of some kind, and in a minute she heard him saying:

"Ladies and gentleman, I have the pleasure of introducing to you Sister Caroline Barrett and Sister Cederstrom, evangelists, who are on their way to Deadwood City in the Black Hills, and will kindly tarry with us during the present week, perhaps longer."

And then she heard a little whispering of "How queer! Did you ever? *What* are they?" running round the room.

"The evangelists stepped out into the little space."—Page 141.

CHAPTER IX.

IN DOC'S HOME.

"WELL I do wonder what sort of voices *those* are!"

Doc added this to the general whispering as Mr. Small's "evangelists" stepped out into the little space facing the company. They were not half so well-dressed as Sister Small herself, whose husband's church was the poorest of little struggling grasshopper churches. Perhaps those limp "Neapolitan" bonnets had been in good taste once, but they appeared crushed, and forlorn, and spiritless now, when

everybody else wore something tall and jaunty.

Dear me! guiltless of any sort of collar, naked wrists and hands, hideous waterproof sack of the very ugliest, oldest-fashioned kind cut straight in the back, with a great baggy hood over the shoulders and straight fronts with two square baggy pockets, — the pretty spinners, I fear, looked upon "Sister Barrett" with a feeling something like aversion.

"Sister Cederstrom" had bare hands also, and an absurd bonnet, and she, too, wore no collar; but her plain short alpaca dress, her comfortable little coat with sleeves, cuffs and neat pockets, were not quite so painfully striking.

"Sister Cederstrom and I are alike in one thing," Doc thought. "We dote on pockets."

And Sister Cederstrom's face was rather pleasant to look upon; good-natured and earnest despite the shaggy brows over the kind eyes, despite the weather-beaten cheeks and frosty chin.

"Friends," she said, stepping out before them, those bare hands clasped, her face beaming with kindliness, and her rythmic Swedish accent compelling everybody to listen; "friends, we have just come into your town and heard that you were hav-eeng a happy little social ti-eeme, all here together. And we thought we must not miss this chance of see-eeng

you and call-eeng you to come out boldly on the Lord's side.

"If we do the Lord's work, we must remember that it is heere a leetle and there a leetle, and be-eeng instant in season and out of season that is go-eeng to reap the harvest. We are go-eeng out to Deadwood. You know that it is a rough new city and full of wickedness, and there is a need of laborers. We expect to have a long and dangerous journey and to have a hard and try-eeng work to do, but we are not trembling at that."

And she told them, always with the quaint rising and falling cadences, about the beginning away back in "dear green Sweden" of this great love which had driven her out to toil "all the long years in her Master's fields." Then, abruptly, this queer, good woman dropped upon her knees and prayed just as though her great love for human-kind compelled her to do it.

"The white harvests! the white harvests!" Doc thought. "That was Miss Paul's own refrain, and she said that the laborers, the loving and true ones, always sing at their work. She said that the fields are always waiting. But *I* can't go to Deadwood. *I* can't preach. I never could be a crusader. Where *are* my fields? I should just like somebody to point 'em out, point 'em out at once, too. I can't be good by

just keeping from doing things that are bad. I must be *very* good if I am good at all, aggressive you know."

Ah, had not Doc, in her wistful blunt thoughts, struck the key of the sweetest, truest living? "*I can't be good by just keeping from doing things that are bad.*"

When the prayer was ended, before the astonished Spinners had time to speak or stir, a sweet, well-modulated voice began the first stanza of "Who is on the Lord's side?" Sung hundreds of times in far-away gospel meetings, strange to say, it never had been heard before in Steeplemix. No striving for effect was betrayed by the singer, but each delicately enunciated word, each pure tone was a fresh surprise, while the refrain was like a bugle-call.

Then, silently, the visitors departed and a great buzzing began again, — the buzzing of "good-nights." Geordie came up to Doc, her face radiant.

"O, Doc," said she, "I'd like to stay in Steeplemix always!"

"I just wish you *could!*" was Doc's earnest rejoinder. "But there, the girls are all getting away! and I wanted to tell them we must all be here bright and early to-morrow, before Miss Scuppernong comes up to fret 'round about her plates. I want to tell 'em we've got our hands to the plough now and mustn't

ever look back. I am so glad you're going to stay all night with me, Geordie, for to-morrow we'll get up something a hundred times better than even this Spinning. *Girls!* GIRLS! GIRLS! *will* you all be here *very* early in the morning, no impending providence preventing?"

Of course they would, particularly Allie Scuppernong, who didn't expect to dream of anything all night but the legend "Peachem" on the back of her aunt's plates. Every girl there was in a glow of triumph, anxious for new worlds to conquer.

Doc and Geordie and Billy walked home together, by-and-by, along the prairie road around the lakes — Billy resolutely budging ahead; for he knew the girls wanted to talk. The prairie fires still twinkled in every direction; the night was fairly blossoming with golden lights above and below.

And what do you think Geordie did? Geordie quoted poetry. It was a most sweet courtesy, a most delicate apology. She had been haunted by the way she had repelled Doc's enthusiasm in that headlong ride out toward the "Ringing plains of windy Troy."

"I answered her just like a real curmudgeon of a girl," thought Geordie, "and I 'lectured' her, too."

She spoke out softly as they walked along by the sweet, chatty, little lake-waves:

"'*When the immeasurable heavens break open to their highest, and all the stars shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart,*'—it *is* then our Gentian land is loveliest, I do believe. And Doc, all those fires out there make me think of an encamped army."

"Yes," returned Doc eagerly, understanding and accepting the peace offering. "And I can guess what you're thinking of, Geordie:

> " So, many a fire between the ships and stream
> Of Xanthus, blazed before the towers of Troy,
> A thousand in the plain; and close by each,
> Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire—' "

And here Geordie's clear voice chimed in cheerily:

> "'And, champing golden grain the horses stood
> Hard by the chariots, waiting for the dawn.'"

Wasn't that a delightful "making up," just reciting poetry in concert! Geordie and Doc ended it with a happy laugh and were tried friends from that minute.

It was a dear little room they entered by and by, having come at last to the dear "home shelter" Doc had so gloried in, remembering always the bleak, shabby "movings" of other days.

This was the only real finished room in the house, and for that reason was always designated as "THE ROOM." It had a good warm ceiling painted

a light brown, and warm ceiled walls covered with oak-colored paper, and it blossomed all over with substantial brackets and cunning little brown cabinets and closets; a snug, brown, glossy room, for all the world like the inside of a walnut-shell.

And it had a fire-place. Think of that — in the Gentian Land, where nobody knew such a luxury as a "wood lot," and nobody, except very fortunate people, dared even dream of anthracite. This fire-place was built across a corner of the room and was used for burning hay. It had a bright red hearth, a grate, and an iron shield which threw out the heat grandly when placed over the fire-place.

Just adjoining the fire-place, one of those glossy little brown doors opened into a closet which was packed full of hay, tightly twisted in large bunches enough to last a week. The fire had only to be replenished twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. And Doc and her mother had kept plants in this room all one winter. To be sure, there were double windows and a double floor and a double air-chamber around the walls. But in the Gentian Land people are obliged to be thorough-going. They *have* to build good strong homestead walls, and solid floors, and firm sheltering roofs.

"THE ROOM" was pleasantly warm now as they

entered it after their walk. A forest of plants on the stand sent a leafy wilderness of shadows over the ceiling, and somebody's every-day Bible lay there in the low lamplight amid the rose-fragrance, just as it always lay when the children came in from any late festival.

"Are you awake, Mother-kin?" asked Doc, softly, as she opened one of those brown doors of the walnut-shell, "because if you're not, I'm sorry I've waked you. But I just wanted to tell you that we took in one hundred and seventy-nine dollars and nine cents. Harry and Billy and Floss and I counted it; we couldn't wait till morning. And O my! Mother-kin, you never could guess how well the girls did spin, all in perfect time! I wanted to hurrah! I won't chatter very late to-night, Mother-kin; but we aren't a bit sleepy, and I *do* want to show Geordie the loom. We'll talk *very* softly."

"It's your father who minds the 'chatter,' you know," kindly said this dear "Mother-kin." "But make the most of your visit with Geordie, dear, and don't forget to be quiet. You can tell all about the Spinning in the morning."

All this while, somewhere outside, but seemingly quite near to "THE ROOM," somebody was keeping up the busiest pounding, and hammering, and chisel-

ing, and screwing, and sawing, and planing, all in such a vigorous way, that you might imagine another Deluge was imminent and an Ark had to be built before morning.

Certainly nobody need mind a little chatter, when such a tremendous hammering as that could be borne! But Doc did not explain it by one word, nor apologize for it, nor inquire of her mother about it, nor allude to it in any way.

So Geordie ignored all this mysterious racket, and smilingly followed Doc into the little room where the loom stood.

You went down several steps going into this room, for it had been made almost underground that it might be very warm, even when in winter the thermometer went down savagely to twenty degrees below zero. It was lighted by a large window in the upper ceiling and one in the south wall. Its walls were painted white, and one side had dainty shelves to hold the products of Doc's loom.

On the topmost shelf another leafy wilderness of plants bloomed and blossomed gloriously in the plentiful light. Even morning-glories were here, to swing their perfect bells over Doc at her happy work. There was a tiny book-rack and an easel. A fireplace was built across one corner, and the big loom

occupied the whole of one end of this cosy little workroom. There was no carpet, because Doc declared that carpets were just nests for dust, though a nice cosy one covered "THE ROOM." Of course Doc's floor was kept beautifully white, for Doc hated dirt with her whole soul.

A great white owl, which, through much perseverance and patience Doc and Billy had succeeded admirably in stuffing, was perched just above the book-rack and looked down at Geordie with two resplendent glass eyes of amber and black. This was the room of all rooms that Doc loved. Her bed-chamber was just a tucked-up closet, such as the boys slept in, and had only one beauty. Its window, like those in the guest-chamber of the House Beautiful, "opened toward the sun-rising."

The loom-room would be warm and bright in the bitterest winter weather. It was near to the house-fire, the cosy tea-table, and THE ROOM clock, and yet it was snugly remote. A nook in which Doc did not forget herself and be "a-gazing," but kept at her work bravely, accomplishing good deeds.

"O, what a funny, lovely room!" exclaimed Geordie. "How I wish *we'd* built one like this and hadn't tried to have a parlor, — I mean a dressed-up parlor for company. I could stay in here always!"

she added, forgetting that half an hour ago she had expressed a similar desire concerning the village of Steeplemix.

"We live in our parlor," said Doc. "You see, Geordie, *we've got to work!* so Mother-kin and I said we *should* have a cosy place to work in. And the children must have *their* work and they have the big table out in THE ROOM, every evening, for their whittling and scissoring and pasting. O, Geordie Earle! I do believe we're the happiest folks that live! You see, we didn't use to have any house at all. We just moved around in the miserablest way, till we came out here. Even grasshoppers can't make us budge from here."

And Doc did look as though she ought to wear the Trumpet Color, standing there with glowing cheeks, gray eyes darkening and sparkling, the firm little hand and wrist uplifting the lamp as though it were a battle standard.

"Not if you had to live on brown bread or potatoes?" said Geordie, incredulously.

"We don't live like folks in 'Lothair,'—on 'ortolans' whatever they are," said Doc. "But we live plainer than you can think. I'll tell you, Geordie we don't eat till we get awfully hungry. Then anything that's cooked wholesomely tastes good."

And both these girls laughed at this bit of sagacity, just as if they didn't know by experience how very tragical it was sometimes, this waiting till you were "awfully hungry."

"Tell you what, Geordie," Doc continued sagely, "folks that want to keep a great pantry full of goodies all the time, and their tables loaded with everything, ought to just read Dickens' stories and notice how they eat."

"Why, how do they eat?" inquired Geordie, wondering if Doc had read every book that ever was printed.

"They just sit down to little, white, cosy tables, and have a roast and a bit of salad, or it's just bread and butter and tea, always something ever so simple, and yet he tells of it in such an appetizing way, and the folks are sure to be such nice, hearty, wholesome English folks, with little Dickens-y oddities, of course, but lovable after all. And if nice, clean, happy English folks can enjoy bread and butter and tea, so can we. And I guess the brightness and cleanliness of it all are half the battle."

"That's what *I* think," said Geordie. A white glittering table, even if there wasn't anything but brown bread, had been one of Geordie's helpful heroisms at home.

"I guess they do mean to chatter all night," remarked Billy, as he carefully deposited his empty boots with exquisite care upon the bare floor of his room up-stairs, "and this crazy hammering going on, too! Murray and Doc together are about enough to drive one family wild."

Doc had reserved her most triumphant display till the last. This was the piece of smooth brown flannel in the loom.

"That's for my two best winter dresses," she informed Geordie. "Mother says it's going to be a real triumph, equal to what her mother used to make. Cut nicely and trimmed with braid and buttons, *I* think they'll be superb! To-morrow, after we come home again, Geordie, we'll weave."

And if Doc had said, "To-morrow we'll try my new piano," Geordie would hardly have been more delighted.

When at last, they were both resting cosily up-stairs under Doc's warm, big blankets, and Geordie, the tired child, had been literally talked to sleep, somebody came softly into the boys' room adjoining, and somebody muttered:

"How my arms do ache! I guess by to-morrow afternoon it'll do. I hope Doc won't go and let her in. I want to get a jolly catch fixed to that drawer,

and the slides to the curtains, and the berths fixed, and the lid to the flour chest, before folks see it!"

I like to pause just here and think of Doc's sound and healthful sleep after her vivid, vigorous day. A girl, "true blue" in her loyal adherence to the home aims, and in helping build up this small staunch roof which sheltered her; "true blue" in accepting the inevitable and making the cheeriest "best of it;" "true blue" in her frank hospitality and hearty sympathies; "true blue" in resolutely taking herself to task for her own crudenesses and shortcomings. Soldierly, too, in that kindling martial spirit which could gather others around her, almost at will, and inspire them with her own eager longing to do good, as we are yet to see.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROUND TABLE.

THE Spinners were on hand when Doc and Georgie arrived. Lillie Rose had gone back to her school, Lib Randolph not come, but all the rest were there. The big wheels stood there dumb and bright in the early sunshine, the walls were gay with the garlands.

"It's too nice to tear up," Floss Day said regretfully.

And then the little company gathered itself into a comfortable bunch, every blessed spinner curled up, child fashion, on the carpet. Nobody had the heart to begin "tearing up." Besides they wanted to look

at Geordie Earle. For there she sat all festooned with yards and yards of the very finest, softest, loveliest pale brown cashmere "in the piece." And mingling with the cashmere, in generous profusion, fell folds and folds of sunny brown silk, tossed over "to see how it harmonized." And above it all, Geordie's dimpled face peered delightedly over the very daintiest and fluffiest of lace bibs with cunning bows of bright ribbon. And between the palms of Geordie's two hands folded in motionless content among the soft draperies over her lap, lay two little kid gloves, new ones, with delightful long, buttoned wrists. You will have to imagine how the very touch of their soft, smooth texture thrilled Geordie with unutterable bliss. I can't find words to describe it.

All these glories Geordie had found enclosed in a dainty white box at the express office this very morning, when she and Doc came down to the village; and just before, at the post-office she had received a letter addressed in that clean, slender, tranquil handwriting which Geordie always said "looked just like Aunt Eleanor;" and there were patterns too in that enchanted box, and a lovely fashion plate with "misses costumes," and the very prettiest of them all marked, as a gentle suggestion from Aunt Eleanor.

Geordie's eyes were full of happy tears, as carry-

ing the white box, she walked along by Doc's side up to the Y. M. C. A. rooms.

"There is certainly enough," she said to herself, "to trim it from head to foot, and silk to face all those lovely fine plaitings, just as it is in the figure she's marked." How the girls swarmed around her, and how recklessly that cashmere was trailed out over the room, and how they tossed it over her and admired so generously and joyously that her heart warmed toward every one of these western Spinners!

And there was still another excitement; the Steeple-mix *Eagle* man had gone home and printed all about the Spinning. Allie Grinager had a moist, crumpled copy, received this morning, and there were all their names in print! For the *Eagle* wasn't at all angry about its bumps being presented in silhouette. It spoke in glowing terms, indeed, of the genius displayed by the unknown artist of the "Family Portraits," said something very pleasing about Miss Gracie Wood as the "Blind Spinner," and complimented the music evoked upon this enjoyable occasion. "Evoked" was the *Eagle's* word. It isn't mine. It always said "evoked." Even when, for instance, it only meant that somebody would sing a quartette about the "Vine Covered Cottage Down by the Lane," at a Mush and Milk Festival. But the Spin-

ners were not critical. They thought "evoked" was simply beautiful, and that the *Eagle* was *very* kind.

Then Allie Scuppernong told them her aunt, Miss Scuppernong, had insinuated more wool was wasted than it all came to; but the Spinners merely laughed at that.

And then they sat and planned what should be done with the "receipts" for the Spinning, quite as cooly as though *they* were responsible members of the "Y. M. C. A."! Allie Grinager did wildly suggest that the boys would settle that matter. "They'll hold a business meeting," she said, "and vote and decide it all in a proper way. We can't decide it. We've helped 'em raise the money, and that's all we can do."

"Psho!" said Floss Day, "I guess *I* know better than that how things are managed. They have business meetings in our church, and nobody ever hears of the sisters' voting. But you see, things are all talked over at home and the sisters all know very well how things are going to turn out. Now I'll tell you what *we'd* better have those boys do."

But she didn't have a chance. The Spinners *all* began to chirrup:

"Four new magazines, at least, we'll have 'em subscribe for!"

"And a comic paper, too!"

"And some games!"

"There's money enough to keep a cosey fire going every day all winter, till nine o'clock in the evening!"

"We'll open a cheap coffee-room to run against the saloons, when winter comes, and the farmers want something hot when they come into town. Coffee-rooms pay for themselves — my auntie says so!"

"We can keep a stand of plants here — maybe!"

"The *Eagle* office will let us have its dailies for the Reading Table!"

I may as well say here, that this *very* Y. M. C. A. did do all those things with the Spinning Bee money.

And now having "settled" this matter, as to what the boys should vote to do with the money, in this helter skelter, eager fashion, these non-voting girls proceeded to organize themselves into a Round Table.

"And say, girls," said Floss Day, having listened very attentively to Doc's breathless and, I must say, rather incoherent recital of her plan, "why can't *we* do things in the regular way? Let's get it up systematically, I say, and not have it hit-or-miss. We got along very well with the Spinning, to be sure. But there's Lil Rose, for instance. It's impossible

to leave her out. But it'll do to say here, I suppose, that Lil needs regulating. And Lib Randolph — "

"We'll leave *her* out, that's what we'll do!" broke in the energetic chorus.

"Well, let's," assented Floss. "She's too rough for anything. My mamma dislikes to have me associate with a girl who says 'I'll bet.' And I do myself. I despise associating with her, I mean."

"What if she's out at the door!" whispered Allie Scuppernong.

"Well, she isn't," returned Floss. "Anybody could have heard her stamping up those stairs if she'd come. Now then, girls, begin."

Doc didn't begin, for the reason that her plan was something to be carried out in earnest, and she had a dim consciousness that this proceeding might turn it all into a burlesque.

"I move that Doc shall be the head of it," said Gracie Wood.

"I move it, too!" said Allie Scuppernong, promptly. And then there was a general shriek.

"Why, Allie Scuppernog, they don't two of 'em move it!"

"Certainly not!" added Doc, in a little dignified postscript to the shriek.

"We can all just sit still, as we are, of course,"

she continued, "all close and comfortable. But we can say what is to be said in an orderly manner. Now. All in favor of that motion—" but Geordie interrupted this time, with a grimace, and a "stop, stop!" which wasn't parliamentary, to any eminent degree.

"What is the matter now?" demanded Doc.

"Why, it isn't seconded," said Geordie.

"Well, we'll begin again," said Grace Wood. "I move that we have Doc for the head of it, because she always *goes* ahead. She does things, and never gets tired, and keeps us all stirred up!"

And what do you think? Every one of those Spinners seconded the motion, all in the same breath and one voice, and then they all laughed again.

"Well," said Geordie Earl, "it has been moved and seconded that Doc Thatcher shall be the—the—*what* did you say, Gracie?"

"Head of it," said Gracie.

"Well, now, we certainly don't want it called *that* way, do we?" asked Geordie, appealing to the Spinners. "And we all went and seconded it too! I'll tell you, we want some lovely name agreed upon, for the first thing, I *think*. Auntie said something about appointing committees to do certain things, but she said we must do just as much right on the spot as ever we could, for committees shirked, and dilly-dal-

lied, and ruined things. I remember that distinctly. And I think we might as well adopt a name for this society before we proceed any further, and what could be nicer, or suit us better, than the 'Round Table,' as Doc Thatcher has suggested? We have all heard of King Arthur's Round Table, I suppose?"

"I've heard of it," said Floss Day, and the rest of the Spinners could truthfully affirm the same thing.

"I read about King Arthur," said Gracie Wood, looking up with flushed little face, from her cloud of hair. "O, the best king! And he lived in fairy times, and he had a circle of great brave knights who came to his 'Table Round,' and they were to live good true lives and not just be fighters. To have them do good — that was what the king wanted most of all."

"But we're girls!" said the Spinners.

"What of that!" Doc burst forth. "Girls can have a Round Table, a glorious one. And we can meet together and tell of our work, and encourage each other. And, you may not think it, but we shall need to be very brave. I'll tell you, girls. Last night I lay a-thinking" —

Now the girls had a tradition that Doc never did sleep, but lay awake, nights, with eyes wide open,

thinking out plans. So they laughed at this. But Doc didn't care, she continued:

"Geordie was asleep. I'd talked her to sleep. And I got to thinking about that woman's talk last night, and the song. And I understood the words — 'The harvests are white.' Now do you know, those words mean that there's *always* plenty to do, and we can do it some by denying ourselves good things to make other people glad — and by giving up learning things we want to learn — and all that. Girls! If, as I do think it is, *beginning to do right with all your might* is coming out on the Lord's side, why I could jump up and down for joy!"

A little reverent hush fell upon those young Spinners, sitting there in the sunshine.

"This is the vow King Arthur's knights took, girls," Doc went on very softly, "'To break the heathen, and uphold the Christ. To ride abroad redressing wrongs!' And they were to 'reverence the king as their own conscience.' O *can't* you see, girls, how beautiful that may be!"

"We *can* see how beautiful it is," said Floss Day, presently, "even if we can't remember poetry as you do, Doc, and make things sound grand. Isn't it strange how that queer woman set us all to thinking?

She's done that much good, anyway. Now, Doc," she continued, more practically, "let's see if we've got your plan all clear. We've agreed, I believe, to call ourselves the Round Table?"

There was a general chorus of assent.

Floss continued, "We agree, each one of us, to go into the country and teach in the destitute districts where they haven't had any school for two or three years and can't have any this winter. We are to go from house to house, as Doc says she's read that the Russian teachers do in winter, and we are to meet together at certain times for a rehearsal of our work and mutual encouragement."

"That is just it," said Doc.

Like some eager philanthropists, she always loved to throw out little hints and suggestions of plans for helpfulness, leaving some plain soul to gather them up and arrange them into something like a practical system. Once arranged into this "practical system" Doc would carry it forward with immense energy and what is popularly termed "magnetic enthusiasm."

"It suits me exactly," said Floss. "The times are so hard I can't go away to school, and the Steeplemix teacher won't take me in because she says my studies are all out of the grade she has established, and I never was any account to study at home.

Mamma doesn't need me to help her, because she has Cousin Sue, and the girl. Consequently, I know I can go. I'll take district No. 29, because that's where our claim is. We've lived up there three summers you know, and I know everybody, and I'm sure mamma 'll be glad to have me go out there to cheer 'em up."

Gracie Wood was fearful that her mother would say "no" the very first minute. Gracie was an only child, the baby and darling of the house. But Gracie thought "Auntie June" would coax for her.

Allie Scuppernong thought she could "manage it," with her folks.

Geordie didn't know about the Beemans and Pottses up in her neighborhood, wanting any teacher, and she hardly thought she could be spared anyway, but she could try harder to be bright and patient, teaching the "busy bodies" at home. And would they consider her a member of the Round Table for *that?*

Of course they would.

Dot had made up her mind to go to the very loneliest, most remote district of all, away up most to the Big Shoe county, beyond Geordie's house. "And you can't guess, girls," she said, "what sort of a house shall be my home."

"You'll board round of course," chorused the

Round Table, "just as we'll have to. We'll live wherever we happen to be."

"Of course," said Floss Day. "When I come to Groesbeck's I'll stay there a day, hearing the little Groesbecks recite, and of course I shall stay all night, and sleep with Katy Groesbeck, with Hatty and Lizy and little Tommy wedged in to keep us from shaking round. Next day I go on to Rudolph's, and so on 'round."

"But I've got my own house all ready, my own house," said Doc, triumphantly. "At least, it's mine and Murray's. I helped buy the lumber. And it's all built — Murray built it — and it'll set on the big wagon and we'll have the oxen haul it up there, for Murray to live in while he traps this winter. Murray knows a splendid place on the Shaneralzi', where the muskrats are building myriads of houses and he expects to catch a small fortune in rats. And I'm going to keep house for him. We've got the dearest little stove with an oven in it, and there's a bed on each side of the room like a ship berth, with curtains, and there's a little cupboard, and every thing just ship-shape. Girls, you just come out and see it before we move."

"Oh-h!" The Round Table gave one simultaneous delighted gasp.

"You didn't show it to me," said Geordie.

"Goosie, it wasn't ready. It was all upset with Murray carpentering in it. Didn't you hear him hammering last night? We're going to make a triumphal march in it up to the Big Shoe, you and Murray and I."

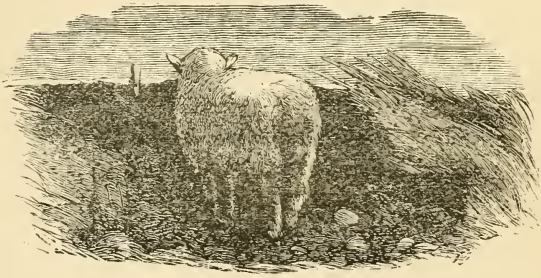
"Oh, *will* you go by our house!" cried Geordie.

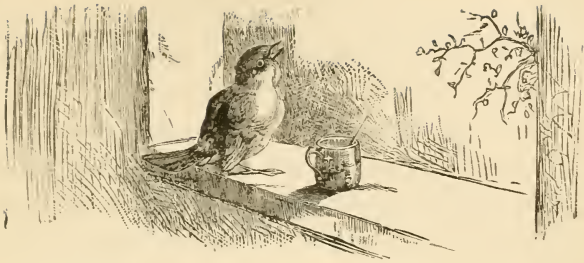
And Grace Wood had jumped up and stood before her with clasped hands, for Gracie had by no means out-grown a childish delight in dolls, and doll-houses; and the idea of that ship-shape little home struck her as something peculiarly enchanting.

"Well, there's one thing," she said at last, as if to dispel a consciousness of her own envy, "if we could all do that, it would be *too* pleasant. We are to be very brave, you know. We are to *find* hard things to do. That's what King Arthur's Knights did. I've always wanted to be brave, and never had a bit of a chance, seems to me, without hunting it up, and then like as not, mamma 'd go to work and turn it into something easy, or help me out, herself."

"We shall find work enough to do, and hard enough," said Allie Grinager, cheery, substantial little Scandinavian maiden that she was. "Our people come every day to my papa, to tell him what hard times they have, and how they can hardly see their

way through, and papa feels just as though he should like to open his door and take them all in like brothers. I know he'll be glad to let *me* do something. And girls, I'd just like to know if we are not as likely to carry this out and do some good, as if we'd gone and elected a regular president and a — a — whatever-the-others-are, and fidgeted for two hours about who should be this or that!"





CHAPTER XI.

THE ST. PAUL GIRLS.

A SQUEAKY, deliberate sound coming up the stairs just then, brought the Round Table to its feet.

"That's Aunt Scuppernong," whispered Allie Scuppernong, breathlessly. "She's coming for her Peachem plates. And oh, dear, I haven't touched 'em. And mamma told me to be sure to do it before ever I went home, last night. Here, girls, be packing up — we *must* be doing something!"

"What a set of idle girls!" said Miss Scuppernong in a minute, her severe eyes not being the least bit deceived by the "busy appearance." "This work ought to a-been done before now, and you a-tending the children's meeting Sister Bassett is holding this

morning in the N. M. Church. Alice, are my plates counted out?"

But Aunt Scuppernong didn't wait for a reply. She immediately advanced upon the deserted and chilly kitchen, where she picked and sniffed about among the stacks of dishes, while the Round Table discreetly busied itself with taking down the Steeplemix chromos.

Geordie had just neatly folded Aunt Eleanor's gifts into the box with its faint rose perfumes, gazing upon various crinkles and wrinkles with deep remorse, when Floss gave a little shriek. "Girls! there's Lib Randolph coming, just 'round Roderick's Corner. I say, let's slip down stairs, and walk off before she gets here. If we wait and let her in, she'll find out all about the Round Table in ten minutes. And *then* we can't keep her out."

The Round Table took one disdainful peep at Lib Randolph coming with her jaunty, swaggering walk up from Roderick's Corner, with her frizzled yellow hair in a tangle to her eyes, and whistling like a wild bird.

They made one grand rush for the door, breathlessly tossing on hats and mantles, and scampered down those outside stairs and away before Lib's as-

tonished eyes without one pause or look of recognition.

The queer little "Knights" walked on joyously together, without thinking where they were going, till all at once Allie Scuppernong proposed that they make one magnificent, simultaneous call on the young ladies from St. Paul.

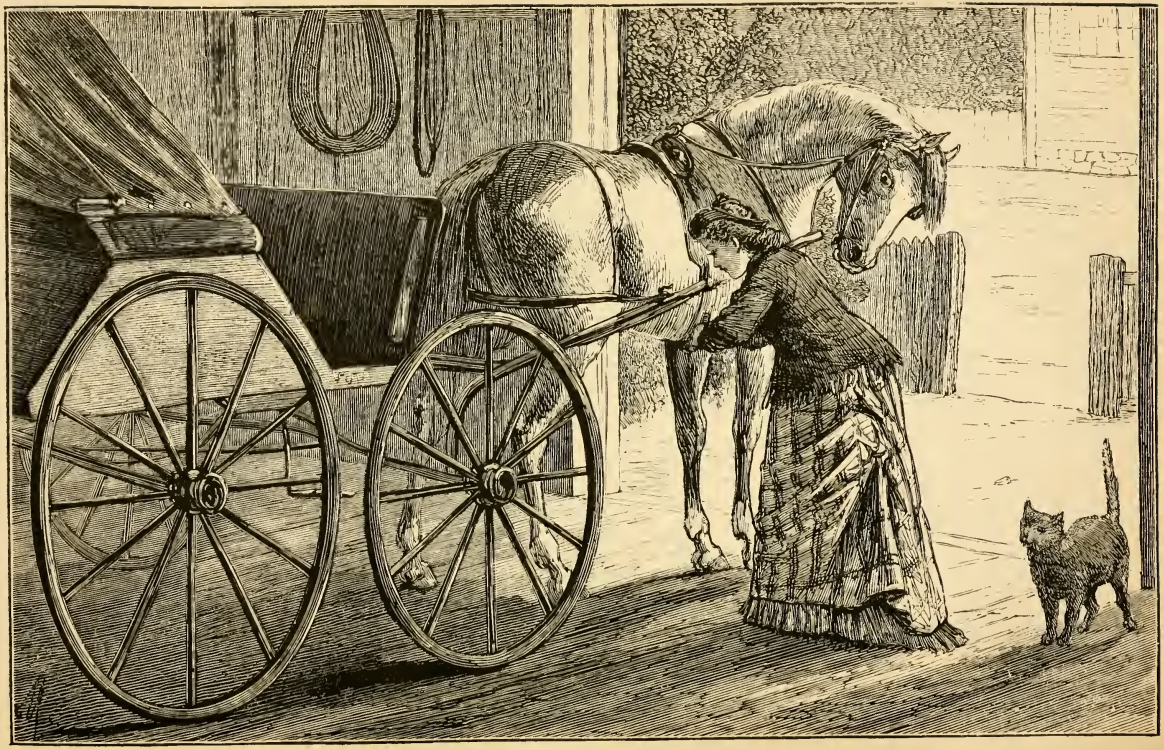
So the Round Table made its call. And it was just the sort of call that Rhoda Vincent and her sister Gertrude considered perfectly delightful, although it must be confessed that their hostess, Mrs. Gibson, considered it rather a freakish, disorderly proceeding. But they became merrily acquainted in that half hour. The St. Paul girls heard all about the Round Table; more, in fact, than the "Knights" themselves had known an hour before, for the more they talked of it, the faster it grew into a clear, plain plan of a delightful winter's work — if only the mothers did not object.

If they had only known it, the mothers were not very likely to interfere. The Steeplemix mothers had wisely decided that it was a good thing to let those energetic little northland girls of theirs carry out their projects as far as possible, having the full benefit of their own mistakes and their own successes.

Should I tell you all I might like to tell about Gertrude and Rhoda Vincent it would take several chapters; rather pale girls, not particularly pretty, but vividly alive from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet. Strange as it may seem, the mother of these young ladies had felt obliged to send them here to rest, because they had been working too hard. You must know that the Vincents were one of these families who had come without a cent — figuratively speaking, of course — to seek a fortune in the growing West.

Vincent *Pater* had contrived to arrange for himself the cosiest, home-iest little photographic studio in the city and to beguile people into wonderfully artistic poses, which drew patronage unto him like ants to honey. Vincent *Mater* undertook the management of a boarding-house, and Vincent *Filliæ* resolved not to hire a single hand-maiden to help with their daily work, not to do anything for themselves which didn't need doing, and not to flinch till they had a bona-fide home of their own.

Rhoda had a very good musical education, and Gertrude had acquired some proficiency in drawing. And as Gerty declared, "If anybody supposed they weren't going to turn those knowledges to account, they were grandly mistaken!"



"Harnessing Mignon."—Page 175.

Every morning after the breakfast work was well out of the way, Rhoda Vincent went to the stable and harnessed Mignon. Why that horse was called "Mignon," I can't tell. He was neither small nor lovely. He was very fond of candy, and had some every day, an extravagance which was strangely considered quite excusable.

Rhoda always took the harness from a particular nail and stood upon tiptoe to throw it over Mignon, who invariably received a fond slap on the nose for looking around before candy time. Then she led him out and hitched him to a comfortable, and not very genteel covered buggy, and the next minute, cosily seated under the faded damask, Rhoda went briskly driving away to give music lessons from house to house, all day long, only returning at night in time to help "do" the dinner dishes.

And early — after Gerty's work was done, she set forth with a portfolio under her arm, to give *her* round of lessons.

But it came to pass, after many days that those cheeks grew pitifully pale and transparent, and the veins quite too distinct in two pairs of determined little hands; and on Sunday the two brave little workers helplessly drooped. They sat all day in loose wrap-

pers and only looked tired and wistful when the bells rang for church.

Then it was that Vincent *Mater*, without asking anybody's leave or liking, introduced two buxom young persons of foreign descent to the ways and necessities of her house, and informed her daughters that her beloved friend, Mrs. Henrietta Gibson, had insisted that they should immediately spend a "vacation" of at least two months at her home in Steeplemix. In short, it was all arranged. So behold them.

"Well, mamma certainly doesn't expect us to sit still like two old invalids," Gerty said to the Round Table, "and I should think we might do something to help. Could we?"

Couldn't they! This was what the Round Table desired, in its heart of hearts.

Geordie thought of her own home, of the short dark days in winter away out on the prairie, shut out from all society, the window panes covered day and night with a savage plush of frost, and the "busy bodies" growing more prankish, and ungovernable every moment. If somebody cheery, and newsy, and bright should come once a week to hear the "busybodies" recite, to inspire them all with the magnetism of a new strong presence, what a helpful thing this would

be! Geordie wished those bright St. Paul girls would be sent to teach in *her* home!

Dr. Gibson came in while they stood there in the happy sunshine, looking very grave.

"Is Geordie Earle here?" he asked, and then his eye fell upon her in the little group. "There's some word from your father, Geordie," he said, coming to her side, "a dispatch for your mother, and one of the train men, too, said he "believed" your father had fallen quite sick."

Geordie's face grew pitifully haggard as she read the brief stern sounding dispatch he handed her. Her mother had been sent for. Geordie ought to be at home, this moment. The lonesomeness, and strivings, and hunger out in that home had seemed so strangely far off and dream-like to her these last hours of laughter and eagerness and good cheer, but they loomed up now with dreary vividness.

"Don't cry," said the Doctor, gently, although Geordie wasn't shedding a tear. "You and I'll go immediately to carry that dispatch, and I'll bring your mother back with me to the depot. And she'll chirk your father up quicker than ten bottles of medicine."

"I want to go home this minute," said Geordie,

her pale lips quivering, "but there's an errand I must do first, Dr. Gibson."

Geordie had thought of a hundred things in those few moments. Auntie never would have sent that costly gift if she had known how things were; rather something to bring general home comfort. It was a wrong to them all for her to keep these things now. A dread, unmentionable possibility of suffering stared them in the face. Should the "busy-bodies" go in patches and want for bread while Geordie wore kid gloves and lace and silk?

It was a dreary thing to do, but Geordie had made up her mind in a moment to sell that precious box with everything in it.

And she did.

"Never mind," said Doc with a firm smile, as Geordie sat at last in the Doctor's buggy, her beautiful suit left behind in one of the stores. "I shall come to see you, Geordie, and bring my house. And we all know even so soon that you are the best and bravest one of all the Round Table Knights, Geordie Earle!"

"Aunt June's parliamentary lesson."— Page 179.

CHAPTER XII.

AUNT JUNE'S PARLIAMENTARY LESSON.

DOC, walking sturdily home in the dark, with her hat off, enjoying the fresh wind blowing in her face, suddenly spoke aloud:

"Well, *I* think Lib Randolph ought to have been in. It's too bad to shut her out from any good thing, after all. How would *I* have felt coming up there to see the girls all turn away with cold faces on purpose to shut me out? It was too cruel!"

And then Doc actually stopped in the road in astonishment at this strange, remorseful tenderness. She had experienced such a sincere disdain for Lib, had been so thoroughly glad to have her "shut out—"

and now, without striving or seeking on her part, here was this inconsistent, solicitous tenderness for Lib creeping into her thoughts.

Yet it was a glad surprise to Doc to find in her heart a consciousness of a love that would save Lib Randolph if it could.

"Perhaps the other girls are thinking just as I am tonight; perhaps they too are ashamed and regretful," Doc continued to herself. "And perhaps we shall all agree that Lib may help, and Lillie Rose too, and all. Who knows but that Lib needs us very much? And we are to help each other in the Round Table."

Billy overtook her just then, coming home from his work, with his dinner-pail swinging in his hand. Doc knew the quick step and cheery whistle and had waited a moment.

"Well, Elder," said Billy as the two started on, keeping soldierly step together, "when do you think the Parsonage will move on?"

It was Murray's "Ark" that he meant, the house he was building for a refuge during his winter's trapping, and which Doc had resolved to make her home in the "circuit."

"When Murray gets thoroughly ready," said Doc. "We've called our society 'The Round Table,' Billy. If you don't know what that means, just look in the

Tennyson Miss Paul gave me and see. I forgot though, that you said you couldn't read Tennyson, Billy."

"Got other things to think of" said Billy, with an air of stern, dignified importance that would have been utterly absurd but for the indisputable fact that he *had* other things to think of — things which were a worry and an anxiety fit only to trouble older heads.

"What, for instance?" demanded Doc.

"Those two thundering mortgages!" returned Billy with unusual vehemence. "Father doesn't say anything but I know how it is. Father and I together with mother's awful skimping, have about paid one off. But the other — that's the clincher. Five per cent interest on the thing, too. I don't say anything to father, because I hate to worry him with it when we can't do anything, and I suppose he says nothing to me for the same reason."

"I don't think father is worrying about that," said Doc serenely, "for the reason that it's nearly all paid. I did it myself with my herding-money, because mother couldn't rest for fear she would lose the roof from over her head, and have to begin those dreadful old 'moving-times' again."

She did not mention that there had been a well balanced scheme of hers which this sacrifice rendered

a total impossibility ; a scheme of going to the nearest city for art lessons, and not given up without a secret struggle and some bitter tears. Billy appreciated this bit of heroism.

"You are a regular General, Dolly," he said as they went together up the home path between Doc's ranks of brave late sweet alyssum and scarlet phlox.

They were very undemonstrative people in Doc's family, and this diminutive, "Dolly," coming for the first time from Billy's lips or from anybody's lips that Doc could remember, gladdened her like a caress, even more affectionate than the deliberate "Dorrie" had sounded long ago in Miss Paul's kindly voice.

"I'm Dorcas, you see, Billy," she said gaily. "Just think how one of these days you'll see the widows and 'orphants' stand around shedding big tears and holding up the jackets I've made, and the fancy work I've done for church fairs, and, maybe, the Steeplemix portraits ! Bllly, it's cheerful thoughts like these that keep me up !"

Gracie Wood sat restfully enjoying the novelty of the bright fire which her mamma had just begun to kindle for these crisp fall evenings, and waiting for a little talk with Aunt June.

That lady sat in a large easy-chair, cosily near the

shining base-burner, gravely quoting splendid passages in German, from Wilhelm Meister, to "Wackford Squeers," who lay in her lap lazily enjoying the stroking of her soft hands as she talked, and regarding her with a droll mystification in his eyes and an occasional quiver of his velvet ears which indicated clearly that his dog-ship was not unimpressed by those rich and rolling utterances of the "Rhine-land."

Auntie June, a little lady not much larger than Gracie herself, had been ordered here by her physician, away from her editorial and reportorial work in Chicago, to rest and recuperate in the sweet and dry atmosphere of the "mountain prairies." She was doing it with a vengeance if eight hours a day of severe study could be called such "complete rest" as had been prescribed for her. At dusk, when dinner time approached, and Gracie's mother, well aware of Aunt June's "weakness," utterly refused to have the lamps lit in the parlor, Auntie June was compelled to "dawdle" as she called it, for a brief season. It was the hour Gracie loved best of all for when Auntie June did dawdle she did it delightfully. If she wasn't translating lovely or droll things to "Wackford" — so called on account of his happy rotundity of figure — she was quite likely to be mimicking some hero or heroine of the rostrum or pulpit till everybody

forgot that such a thing as dinner was ever expected.

Some people might consider Aunt June's ways of relaxation absurdly childish. She disdained to do such endless knitting, netting and crochetting as that with which Mrs. Wood kept her house brightly blossomed over, but she could spend a whole hour in the gloaming with Gracie contentedly stringing sea-shells over the carpet into "caravansaries," and "Queen of Sheba," and "Solomon's navies getting home from Tarshish." She liked to tell riddles or to sew carpet-rags or to sit stringing pop-corn into long festoons of crisp little roses, but Auntie June laughed to scorn any such dignified game as chess, for instance.

"I should just like to know, Auntie Juniata Castleton," Gracie said now suddenly, "how they get 'em into the Chair, at the meetings. You ought to know, when you've been to everything."

"Dear me!" And Auntie Juniata Castleton, suddenly sitting up very straight, allowed the devoted Wackford to roll in a humiliated condition to the carpet.

"Are you — thinking — of becoming a public character, Miss Wood?"

"Laugh just as much as you please, auntie. I know it's dreadfully ridiculous, but we got into a terrible tangle trying to organize ourselves. We wanted

it to be dignified and orderly and substantial — and it *wouldn't.* And after a while we just promised to do what Doc wanted — and it's something very beautiful and we think we'll like it better than the Spinning — but that was the end of it. Of the meeting, I mean."

"I suppose that's about the end of all the meetings," said Auntie June. "They all promise to do what somebody wants, and then go home comfortably and forget all about it."

"We aren't going to forget," said Gracie, earnestly, and bringing an ottoman for a seat at auntie's feet. "You see, auntie, this is what we want to do — " and Gracie proceeded to give Auntie June the outline and details of the Round Table plan, winding up with a coaxing "And now you're to persuade mamma to let me go!"

"I thought people didn't dare peep out-doors here in winter," said Miss Castleton. "I supposed your eyes froze shut in ten minutes every time you stepped out, and I thought that whenever there had been a big blow, they took sleighs and robes and wine and a doctor for the living, aud drove round over the prairie to pick up the dead. You don't suppose I shall coax your mamma to let you travel round in such a country as that, do you?"

"It's one of your wicked Chicago stories! — " Auntie June loved dearly to see Gracie's face kindle as it did then, the naughty woman! — "I should think you couldn't bear to speak like that, when you're sick and have to come up here to get well. I think those Chicago papers are the meanest — "

"So they are, outrageous," laughed Aunt June, and she certainly had good opportunity for knowing. "I only said I 'supposed,' you know, Gracie. I'm delighted to hear that it is a mistake. Do you think, dear, that you are really qualified to teach?"

"Auntie, you know I've read two books of Virgil, and mamma and I are translating Corinne."

"Oh!" said Auntie June. "Then you are certainly qualified. No doubt the prairie children are all hungering for instruction in the languages — any language except English. But, who will tuck you up nights? And what will you do for cream coffee? And who will button the back of your basque?"

"Auntie June, you know I've been a baby long enough — you've said so. And I know I speak English like a baby. And you know I'd do better if I *had to.* Besides, we're all going to the county superintendent to be examined and get certificates. Then you'll see."

Privately, Auntie June thought she would advise

mamma to let Gracie try this new work of love, and swiftly decided in her own mind that there were several ways and means by which she could help these girl-knights. But she did not wish to commit herself just yet, and returned to the subject Gracie had first introduced. A little lesson in this line, she thought, would not be amiss.

"I must think about it," she said gently, stroking Gracie's excited little face. "Shall I tell you, now, how they organize a meeting, Gracie?"

"Do!" said Gracie.

"Very well," returned Auntie. "We will suppose that you have met for the purpose of organizing the 'Woman's International and Esthetic, Culinary and Hygienic Association'—"

"My!" gasped Auntie's listener.

"Yes, there's a crying need of such an Association. The ladies have turned out 'en masse.' The solid ladies of the city are here—so to speak. The toilettes are comforting to look upon. There is even a baby or two.

"We will assume, of course, that Miss Wood, one of the gentlest, most thoroughly educated and refined young ladies of the city—Miss Thatcher, one of our most enthusiastic 'educators,'—and Mrs E. G. Ponderwell (lately returned from Europe), and perhaps

a few others, have carefully discussed this meeting *beforehand.* They know just what is to be done. In fact the whole affair may be said to have been pretty well cut and dried beforehand, just as most every important undertaking needs to be.

"Accordingly it comes to pass that all these ladies, being in convention assembled, Miss Wood, who is well acquainted with Miss Ponderwell's admirable executive ability, immense self-possession and social leadership — Miss Wood, I say, rises to her feet — "

"And what *does* she say?" put in Gracie, breathlessly. "That's the thing. I want to know exactly. And does she step out before 'em?"

"My sweet child, *I* think she should. Being naturally retiring, *she* probably will *not.* But she rises — " and Auntie June rose to illustrate, "and not in a hurry, not with a scared, bobbing motion, but majestically, my dear. She has a very beautiful, quiet, conversational voice, and says modestly and pleasantly, 'Ladies, I nominate Mrs. E. G. Ponderwell for chairman of this meeting — ' or, more likely, she will say, 'I nominate Mrs. E. G. Ponderwell for *President* of this meeting.' It sounds better and means the same thing.

"Then Miss Thatcher, who desires to see this business run like clock-work, rises promptly and says in the

same quiet way, 'I second the nomination.' Everybody looks pleased because Miss Thatcher has done it and nobody else had to make the effort. Then Miss Wood, still standing, says, with a grave, sweet grace:

"'It has been moved and seconded that Mrs. E. G. Ponderwell shall act as President of this meeting. All in favor of that motion signify it by saying "aye!" Everybody who feels like it ought to say "aye" then, a nice, silvery, cheerful, "aye" in concert. After which Miss Wood says, "All not in favor of that motion signify it by saying "no."' You are simply to remember the things you want to have done, and that makes it easy.

"Now you have elected a President of your meeting. As you would say, you have got somebody into the Chair. And Miss Wood takes her seat. The president advances to the platform, with O! such a beautiful 'carriage,' and, having bowed her thanks, blandly suggests that the next necessity of the hour is to have a secretary to record the actions of this meeting —"

"That would keep Lib Randolph a good deal straighter — if we had her in," remarked Gracie.

"Are you taking notes, my dear? Well, never mind. Miss Thatcher is known to be skilful with the

pen, and a charming 'composer,' but you are not such innocents as to nominate *her* for secretary on account of that, as some people would do. She is your best worker. You want her in the ranks, you know, and Miss Floss Day, fully understanding this fact, nominates some nice, shy little lady for secretary. She doesn't rise to her feet to make this motion unless she likes.

"That also seems to be a question of taste, after the meeting is opened. But *I* should rise. This motion is seconded and voted upon like the first, and the secretary takes her place. Now you are all right. You can just grandly go ahead. Particularly as your President is perfectly reliable, amiable and sensible. She will probably open the proceedings — the preliminaries to which I have just described — with a graceful little address, more like a lady in her parlor engaged in conversation, than anything else. She will inform you that *you* know, probably, for what object you are assembled — it is for the organization of a 'Ladies' International Esthetico-culinary and Hygienic Association.' She will briefly allude to the various needs for such an Association, and eloquently touch upon the benefits which may arise, &c. &c. And finally, having suggested that others should speak in order that all may come to a full understanding of

the subject, she literally and gracefully subsides into the Chair. Now this is the time for you. If you don't have a feast of reason and a flow of soul, it's your own fault. And if there is a soul here that has a morsel of objection to the organization of the 'Woman's International and Esthetico-culinary and Hygienic Association,' let her speak now or forever after hold her peace."

"But, Auntie June, the Society — the Association — you haven't told, after all, how they organize *that*."

"Well, when everybody's opinions have been sufficiently aired, the President comes out royally. She remarks in a cheerful manner which means business that 'time is precious.'

"Miss Wood moves that a committee of five be appointed, to draft a Constitution for the Association, to be acted upon at the next meeting. This will be seconded and voted upon. And now, my precious, you will be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in selecting that committee. It is here your genius should shine. You must have a committee that will *not* dawdle, but *will* be on time, and will clearly understand what is wanted of them."

"*How* do we select them?" inquired the merciless Gracie.

"Oh! I forgot. Miss Wood rises and says, 'I wish

to inquire, Mrs. President, whether the nominations shall be made and voted upon singly, or collectively." And the President, in turn, promptly inquires in a business-like way, glancing at her audience, 'What is the pleasure of the meeting with regard to this?'

"Probably Miss Day, who is a good worker, will next arise and lift up her voice. She will say, 'Mrs. President, I move that the nominations for members of this committee shall be made and voted upon singly.' Seconded. Carried. Now don't be afraid to stir about and consult each other, and decide upon your nominations. This isn't a Quaker meeting. Don't dawdle. Push things."

"Auntie," said Gracie, still intent upon applying auntie's directions to the familiar little coterie of girls, and speaking rather disconsolately, "the chairman and the secretary and the committee will take just about all there is of us!"

"Well, then," said Auntie, with provoking calmness, "don't organize. But it's well enough to know how, chickadee. I have seen grown women who knew no more about it than you do. And it was dreadfully inconsistent for them."

Gracie did not guess, for a moment, resting there as she lightly chatted with Aunt June in the blessed warmth and shelter of her home, what a lonely heart

was coming desperately here for sympathy and help. And, nervous little body that she was, the pink fled from her cheeks in a ridiculous manner as, in answer to a quick, sudden rap, she herself opened the door, and Lib Randolph entered. Just as if Lib were an ogre or a ghoul, instead of a girl in a flimsy old flounced alpaca, with cheap toilet perfumes that smelt of alcohol, and nibbling cloves — when she wasn't chewing wax — till her breath was forever suggestive of sweet pickles and mince pies.

"I suppose," said Lib, sharply, as she took a proffered seat, "you thought I didn't know you girls were running away from me to-day, but I did. And I was only coming up to tell you how sorry I was that I acted so last night. I don't have any help at home as you do. And I don't say this for a sensation, like Lil Rose says things. It's true. If you don't believe it, come and see. You never come, any of you. You don't know how it is. O, I can't bear it! I can't bear it!"

She had spoken in a high, strained wavering voice, without any of the swagger Gracie disliked so much, and now broke down utterly. She covered her face with her hands, and Gracie could see her shaken with great silent sobs, the tears trickling through her fingers.

"I just wish we'd given you a chance to say it,"

said Gracie, the quick tears starting to her own eyes, "I don't know but — seems as though I shall *have* to tell you everything, Lib, and let you into it. No matter what the girls say. They'll all 'come round.'"

"No, you never will!" said Lib with sudden energy and dropping her hands from the tear-wet face. "I won't be in it, whatever it is. I knew there was something when Doc went 'round speaking to the girls last night. She didn't say a word to me. I don't blame her. But I don't mean to go with any of you, ever again. There! And you needn't take any trouble to keep out of my way. I thought I'd come over and tell you *that!*"

And Lib departed abruptly as she had come.

CHAPTER XIII.

SWEET ALYSSUM.

DOC and Murray were up before sunrise, pounding away at the Ark, preparing to take up their journey to the Big Shoe country. No ship's cabin, or ship's kitchen ever was more ship-shape than the Ark. Doc declared she had bent all the energies of her gigantic intellect toward its successful completion; and if this was the case, what should be said of the long devotion Murray had lavished upon it?

All Murray's ambition pointed one way. He longed to become a mighty hunter, or a successful fur trader; he burned to go along with every "Yellow-

stone expedition," in some capacity or other; he yearned to be a miner; he wouldn't have objected to being Wild Bill or even Sitting Bull. And he was determined to paint upon the back end of that wagon, "Black Hills or Bust!" as was often seen in big red letters on every emigrant wagon going through this region.

The fact that this expedition was not expected to go even in the direction of the Hills made no difference. Doc laughed softly to herself.

"After all," she was saying, as with rosy cheeks out there in the frosty air she busily tacked up a red curtain over the wee window, — "after all, if it's going to be such a luxury for him to paint the letters, why, I can stand it!"

The sun came up presently and the great prairie, covered with its plushy garment of white frost, was tinted everywhere in the loveliest way — long level golden glows, with daintiest pink and pale blue hues upon all the wide shining distances.

There was a mirage, too. Wide, bright lakes shone whitely in unexpected places. Far across the prairies strange houses suddenly rose to view and the little village of Gaston, usually out of sight, was plain to be seen, with its houses shining like a row of stars. As for Steeplemix, it loomed up in a wonderfully near

and friendly way. Doc stopped hammering, and stood in the door of the Ark. "This is the very loveliest land in all this world — I *love* God for bringing me here," she said softly.

Just then Murray's head in its woolly cap peered round the corner. There was a streak of red paint across his nose, highly suggestive of Sitting Bull.

"Doc," he said serenely, "there's Mrs. Tanner coming across the field to the stable, up to her knees in frost."

Not up to her knees in frost exactly, but in frosty grass, which was about as bad, stumbling painfully along in a pair of her husband's hard, gnarled, old, worn-out boots, which "were all the shoes she had." She wore a wilted sun-bonnet, which perfectly suited her dejected expression, and carried a dingy tin pan in her hand.

"Now I didn't s'pose you'd really be up," said she, as she came up, and seated herself pensively upon the wagon tongue, holding the empty pan in her limp hands. "And here you be, out to work, chirk as a lark."

"Too good a morning to be wasted in doors," said Doc.

"It's dreadful frosty," said the despondent voice. "My feet are jest soaked. I don't like these my-

rages. When we first moved onto the prairie and see one, we was all scairt 'most to death. I think it's a fore-runner of something."

"Of what?" said Doc.

"A fore-runner of *something*," repeated Mrs. Tanner. "Didn't I ever show you my verses about the my-rages?"

"Why, no," said Doc, gently. "But I don't think there's anything supernatural about it, Mrs. Tanner—only wonderful. Do you want to get something in your pan?"

Mrs. Tanner always had to be helped in this way to tell her errand. She would have waited there till night, holding her empty pan, before she could have found courage to speak. But now she looked up appealingly.

"It's really too bad now—I'm dreadfully ashamed, but you see we're all out of flour; our little mite o' buckwheat ain't ground yet, and I haven't a mite for the children's breakfast, and as Mr. Tanner 'll get some soon, I thought you wouldn't mind. And if you're going to town to-day, any of you, *would* you mind bringing out a little tobacco for Mr. Tanner? He's all out of change, now, though he wouldn't have me mention it for the world if he knew — but he's *all out*, Doc," and Mrs. Tanner added, with a pitiful apol-

ogetic look on her thin face, "you know how a man *is* when he's out."

Doc listened in a quiver of indignation. Not with the helpless Mrs. Tanner, but at Mr. Tanner. It was not the first time Mrs. Tanner had done this errand. Just as if *he* didn't understand that when he was out Mrs. Tanner would certainly manage to supply him in some way. Doc knew too well how it was. She had visited the poor little home enough to know that when Mr. Tanner was "out," he made things decidedly miserable for the wife and children around him.

Out of pity for Mrs. Tanner and the children, Doc had once actually sent Murray to him from Steeplemix with the coveted abomination. But she resolved never to do it again.

"Yes, I know how it is," she said, gently as she could, "but were I you, Mrs Tanner, I'd fight it out on that line. It'll be a kindness to let Mr. Tanner stay out. But I know mother 'll lend you the flour. And I'm coming over to-morrow to talk over things, and bring something nice for baby. We can't have many more visits before I go to the country."

Mrs. Tanner dreaded to go home with no promise of the coveted tobacco to help her endure her husband's gruffness, but she consoled herself with the

thought that she would make some beautiful "verses" to give to Doc when the day of parting came.

After Mrs. Tanner had gone dejectedly trudging home with her pan well filled, Doc busied herself with taking up some bunches of scarlet phlox and sweet alyssum to carry to Lib Randolph. "That'll make a splendid errand," she said. "Mother can't take care of all my flowers, and I *can't* leave these to die. And Lib's so fond of perfumery I should think she'd like this dear, darling, precious alyssum better than those cheap little bottles of "Night-blooming Cereus," the horrid alcohol-y stuff! Catch me putting *that* on *my* handkerchief!'

After breakfast, Doc perched the big basket full of blossomy sweetness in some miraculous manner before her on Ann's patient neck, and went galloping to Steeplemix.

She stopped first to see Lillie Rose. Lillie had come home because the district could not afford to keep up a school any longer at Gaston.

Doc had little patience with Lillie's ways. But then, she had taken herself to task many times since that walk home in the dark with the strange yearning tenderness coming into her heart and making it glad. "There's selfishness in wanting to do a good thing all one's self, shutting other folks out of the joy of

doing it. I don't mean to be like that if I can help it." So she stopped to speak to Lillie about the new work the Knights had begun.

Lillie, sitting placidly in her mother's pleasant little parlor, with the inevitable crocheting in her hands, looked up startled, at the sound of Ann's hoofs clicking briskly upon the very sidewalk, and beheld Ann's sorrel nose and green ribbons nodding over the gate, Doc sitting up very straight and blithe with the blossomy basket in her arms.

"Good morning, my fair maiden," said Doc, "will you be so kind as to step out here and tie up Ann's left bow? If I could *only* learn to do the French twist — Ann is getting so tired of braids. By the way, Lil, we're to meet this afternoon to sort over that knitting. We've got to distribute every bit of it next week. Lil, you *must* join the Knights! We need every speck of help we can get."

Lillie meditatively stroked Ann's nose, and looked up at Doc with large light eyes, which she intended should be brimfull of "soul" just then.

"You didn't know that I became acquainted with Sister Barrett when she was here, did you, Doc? She is such a saint — you can't think! She keeps a journal. She showed it to me. It is not intended for any human eye, but she and I are kindred spirits, and

she read it all to *me.* O, so beautiful! Such depths! I shall never again care for the things of this world, Doc dear. And I am keeping a journal; I'll show it to *you.* You are so true, so sympathetic, so — " Lilly had suddenly flown to some inner room, with sweetly silvery echoes of "so frank, so honest, so sweet," till she returned, bringing a dainty little journal with blue and gold covers, out of which, standing by the gate with bare head, she began to read.

"Stop! stop!" said Doc, suddenly, raising her hand, and almost letting the basket fall. "Why, it's wicked, Lillie Rose. At least, it sounds wicked. To talk about — about the Lord in that way — almost as if it was one of the neighbors. How *can* you? Do you mean that you will *not* help us at all, Lillie, because you think doing this is better?"

"Yes," said Lillie, serenely. "That's what I mean. I correspond with Miss Barrett, too. O, it is such a beautiful life! But I shall think of you at your work."

Doc rode on, wondering what the girls would say if she should repeat these passages from Lil's journal. But she never did.

"I like being out in the good air, and doing things," she said to herself, with a perception of smothering sickliness in Lil's way of living.

"After all," she added, "it'll be refreshing not to

have Lil's 'spells' coming on, to worry us. I'm afraid I'm rather glad she's taken to the journal."

Lib Randolph stood in the door of her home. (O, the dreariest place, with an outlook upon the railroad, the great east sloughs, and the bleak little Steeplemix graveyard!) She wore a trailing soiled wrapper, which, however ill-made, yet hung about her with jaunty grace.

"Howdy!" she said, twirling the rings on her fingers, as Doc rode up and, letting the basket to the ground, dismounted. Now if ever there was an expression Doc despised in her inmost soul, it was "howdy," for "how do you do." It was hard, I can tell you, to keep herself up to that plane of sweet Knightly compassion and sympathy for this swaggering everyday sort of girl, flinging "howdy" at her in that half contemptuous way. And Doc hadn't heard a word of Lib's quick tears and angry defiance, that evening in the dusky parlor with Gracie after the "Parliamentary Lesson." She had come here solely through the impulses of her own generous heart.

"I've brought you something a good deal sweeter than 'Night-blooming Cereus,'" said she, after a minute. "I couldn't bear to leave them for the frost, and I'd rather you'd have them than anybody, Lib."

That glance of those clear gray eyes, with the rare

sweet charity shining in them, went straight to the mark.

"I believe you would," said Lib, suddenly stooping and lifting the basket up to her face. "Did you *really* think I'd *care* for anything like this?" with a half-wondering, half-glad questioning, as she looked away from the blossoms again.

"I *knew* you would," said Doc, heartily.

Back in the dingy parlor stood a box of cunningly striped, bright stockings, which Lil had knit long before the Spinning out of yarn she had spun at home. Her wheel stood there, too. This very morning she had been in a fever within herself about those stockings. She had meant them in the beginning for a surprise, just to show the girls that "there was some good in her, after all." Should she present them now, when they had turned away from her, and left her out in the cold, and despised her, or should she stand aloof? She had worked at them eagerly, night and day, thinking what Floss would say, and Doc, and all of them.

"Come in," she said to Doc, suddenly. "I want to show you — what I'd meant not to show to anybody. I meant to burn them, that's what I meant to do, I *think*. I made them ever so long ago, most of them, and they were for a surprise, and then—you—all

shut me out, and —" suddenly covering her face to hide the hot tears, "oh, Doc, it's been awful! *You* can take them now, Doc. But you needn't say where they came from."

"I will, though!" said Doc, diving cordial hands into the box of dainty knitting. "Who'd have thought you were such an old-fashioned girl, Lib, that could knit like this? *I* couldn't begin to do it. Why, here are eight pairs! See here, Lib, Ann and I have got to carry some parcels home to mother presently, but this afternoon I'm coming after you. You must help us over at Allie's. Allie has knit *one* pair, and she thinks that's wonderful!"

Lib tried, but she couldn't keep the gladness out of her face, though it was still wet with the tears. She changed the subject, asking how long the alyssum would bloom and how it should be kept.

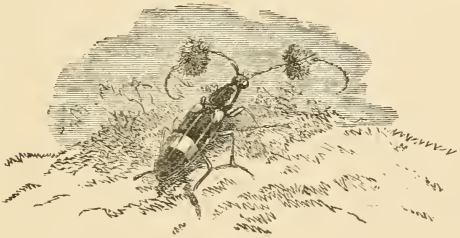
Doc went away thinking, "If the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet shall go to the mountain. We'll just carry our knitting down to Lib's to arrange. You see, Ann, it will be so much more dignified for her, than to go poking off to *their* houses to be comforted up and sort of patronized. *She'll* be entertaining *us*. Pity if we can't endure Lib's roughness without being spoiled by it. And I shan't think we are good for much, Ann, if there isn't any influence about us which will do her good."

Somehow, after Doc had gone, the bright blossoms all so dewy fresh and sweet seemed to bring out anew the dinginess of the room, as Lib stood there alone. Dismal brown building-paper on the walls, cobwebs in the corners, rusty stove just where it had stood all summer, a great shreddy hole in the carpet just before it. Lib was the only house-keeper, you must understand. Her mother had died soon after coming here, and was buried out there in the little graveyard on the naked prarie.

Why her father had selected this place for a home, when the country was full of magnificent "sites," was a question often asked by Lib. I think it may have been with a vague hope that something sensational might happen sometime; some fabulous rise in the value of real estate in the great future city of Steeplemix, when people would say to strangers, pointing in an off hand way with their thumbs over their shoulders, "There's old Jack Randolph's property now. He wouldn't take twenty-thousand to-day for them lots with the big warehouses on. And time was when them lots was reg'lar frog ponds, sir. Reg'lar frog ponds."

Jack Randolph had heard remarks like that in the cities. And I believe he had a dim hope that this might happen again. But nobody came to buy lots in the big sloughs to build ware-houses on, and the

grasshoppers did come down on hot, fateful summer days, roosting on the green grass till it was red with them, and Jack Randolph, sitting disconsolately in his arm-chair on the sidewalk, declared that he could fairly see the creatures grin. He was making preparations to go to Deadwood now — going to walk to Fort Pierre, hoping after that to get a ride with some of the trains. One of these days he would come back and make Lib grand as a queen. Send her to Boston, maybe, for a musical education. Perhaps to Europe. Meanwhile Lib must shift for herself the best she could. He could send her plenty of money, likely, by-and-by.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE MOUNTAIN GOES TO MAHOMET.

"IT isn't strange the girls never have fallen into a habit of running in, as they do at other houses," Lib reflected as she stood there alone after Doc had gone. So dreary down here by the sloughs; so dreary, too, in the house. "Walls ought to be clean and fresh-looking when you have flowers," she observed as though this were a highly original discovery. That great hole in the carpet ought to be mended. What a time she had every morning getting the dust out of those fringes!

Well, Lib took up the ragged piece, cleaned it thor-

oughly and mended it; washed the floor and put the piece down again. This only filled her spirit with a vague unrest. The great clean patch was "not particularly gorgeous," she said to herself, but even that touch of tidiness made the stove look uglier and rustier than ever, and the walls browner. One of these days when her father had gone she meant to go at this work anew.

All at once that afternoon, as Lib sat in the gray room, "wrestling" as she called it with a great basket of the dilapidated old garments which were to comprise part and parcel of her father's out-fit, she heard the rhythmic tread of feet out on the sidewalk, and the metallic click of a pony's hoofs. It was too late to "run," which was Lib's first impulse. The Knights were at the very door, Doc in the midst of them, Ann's bridle over her arm, Ann discreetly clattering along after her among the pretty, crimped, fluted and rufled afternoon "calicos," her braided head peering out among the hats and dainty frills and ribbons. Even Doc had learned that a plain linen collar did not become her dark face, but that she must wear a fluffy ruffle with a bit of vivid color to knot it at the throat.

Every one of the Knights had entered into Doc's plan about Lib with her whole soul. They gathered

up those heaps and heaps of stockings which had been left at Allie Grinager's, and marched away on this errand of love — even Floss Day, although it came hard to her to leave Allie's great soft arm-chair in the cosy Grinager parlor.

A great basket of the Spinning Bee knitting was perched triumphantly on Ann's back, and every girl had her arms full. They trooped into the gray room, just as they had done at Allie's, tossed their hats on the table, deposited the knitting, and took possession of things generally in the most heart-whole manner, even of this "out-fit," over which Lib's fingers and eyes had ached and her nerves grown "creepy,"—Doc declaring that if there was anything in the world calculated to bring out her genius it was fixing up old clothes.

"Wouldn't you better bring in Ann too?" Lib had laughed out sharply, in the midst of the general chatter; but nobody noticed, for Gracie Wood was chattering like a little magpie.

"Doc said it would be splendid down here, nobody but girls in the house! And so it is: Lib, where *is* that box? Doc says nobody has got such a box as yours. Did you sit up nights? Lib — girls — do you know,—I've got something to tell! Aunt June, and mamma, and Miss Scuppernong, and some other

ladies, have organized a society — a Home Study Society. They organized it the other day in our parlor— I saw 'em, it's splendid!"

"I think it's beautiful of Miss Scuppernong to take hold and help, when she's been so provoked at us," said Allie Grinager.

"Yes," said Gracie, "for you see, girls, this Society is to help us. It is to have members among the mothers in every district where we go, and once a month they're to come together down here at Steeplemix to hold a grand" —

"Pow-wow," suggested Floss.

"No, a grand talk-things-over, to find the very nicest, best ways for getting the children to study at home; so there'll be splendid lessons for us to hear. I think it's lovely of them. Our work and their work 'll be all linked together — like a golden chain you know — and one part can't do without the other part. But, oh, Lib — why don't you produce that box?"

How the Knights with sparkling eyes dipped in their eager hands and stirred up the bright little smooth-knit stockings! "Just look at mine, now," said Gracie, ruefully holding up one single forlorn specimen of her own funny knitting, which had a curiously blistered appearance, and a foot shaped so

exactly like a nice plump pumpkin seed that everybody laughed. "But they'll keep some little tot's feet warm, all the same," Doc said.

Lib's cheeks glowed at their praise. "I colored that yarn for the brown stripes, myself," she said, quickly. "Mother showed me how, long ago. Brown stripes are nicest for little boys, you know. And I colored the plain red ones. And do you think these baby ones are pretty, with the crocheted tops and blue ribbon run in?"

Didn't they! The Knights longed to rush right out on the prairie that minute and carry those snow-white blue-ribboned socks to frost-nipped baby toes. They knew very well just where the little frost-nipped toes were to be found. Sorrowful stories were coming in every day, of the woe the locust plague had made. O for a hundred pairs of such darling baby socks!

All the afternoon the Knights sang, and chattered and worked. I don't believe they ever were happier. By four o'clock the packages were all neatly arranged and awarded to the different Knights for distribution.

It was all very well for the mothers to have their society with a President and Secretary, and everything done in an orderly substantial way, and it did make a sort of shelter of authority and approval over the little Knights which they were rather glad to have.

"And swung them with a click and a flourish before Doc's astonished eyes."— Page 217.

But, after all, they were certainly happy enough working in their own earnest half-romantic way, haunted forever, if each one would have confessed it, with Doc's tender thought about the King, and the Knights doing His will.

Doc was the last to go that happy afternoon. She stopped a moment to tell Lib she had selected three pairs of the cunningest smallest stockings from her knitting to carry to St. Louis Alexander Tanner.

"Do you know what particular thing I always do when things are going awful bad, and just the same when they're awful jolly?" inquired Lib, suddenly tipping her golden frizzled head one side like a canary, while she tapped the step with her nervous little foot to the tune of "Johnny Comes Marching Home."

"No, I don't know as I do," said Doc.

"*This* is it," said Lib; and from her ribbon-decked side pocket she suddenly drew two pairs of "musical bones," adjusted them with wonderful celerity in her fingers, and then swung them with a click and a flourish before Doc's astonished eyes. "O, it isn't wicked," she laughed. "They had 'em at the 'Missisippians' for the benefit of the Alamoosa University, you know. Everybody went, you know. I can go like the bass vial with my mouth, as they did too.

Taroom! Taroom! And I can go like the piccola, and the cornet. I can beat Johnny Grinager with the bones. When Mrs. Grinager or any of 'em aren't there, Johnny plays jolly things on the organ in the parlor, and I stand by the gate and click the bones, evenings. Once I went in and went like the cornet while Johnny played on the organ. You just ought to've heard!"

"O, but, Lib," said Doc, in expostulation. I wouldn't, *wouldn't* do so any more!"

"Yes, you would," said Lib, serenely clicking the bones to an imaginary air, as she talked. "When the house gets so still, and dark comes on, and there isn't anything you want a light for, and nobody comes in, and your father is going away, and you know it, and you think how much stiller and darker it's going to be then — *then* you don't care much what you do! The bones then are a real comfort. *Some 'o dem people is mine! Cross ober! Cross ober!* Doc, will you come and tell me how St. Louis Alexander likes his stockings?"

Doc promised. "And there'll be more jolly times like to-day, Lib. And, Lib — I *wouldn't* go over to Johnny's to click the bones, not at least unless Mrs. Grinager knows!"

The sky was all shrouded over as Doc rode home,

and before she had gone far the wind was blowing great cold drops of rain in her face. Faster and faster came the drops, and faster galloped Ann without any urging, except a little of Doc's usual friendly admonition, "I think Ann, that the my-rage *was* a forerunner of something — a good soaking for you and me. But you *must* get home before the rain spoils Alexander Tanner's stockings."

Ann did reach home in time to save them. Doc put the good little pony in the stable and gave her a great heap of the redolent prairie hay for her supper. She hung the bridle and saddle against the wall, shook out the dripping mane, comforting her the while with the absurdest "baby talk," then ran to the house with her various precious parcels in her arms.

"What an admirable motherkin, not to go and get supper, though I am a little late!" said Doc, finding her mother sitting placidly by a bright fire, mending one of Murray's jackets. "A motherkin who wasn't admirable would have got supper all ready and then looked abused and been horrid when I came. You're the best motherkin in the world, and your son, Sweet William, has sent you a paper of prunes for supper. Think of that, mother. Prunes! But I *don't* think there's time to stew 'em. I never was so hungry. Let's eat some raw." And Doc accepted her own

invitation with alacrity. Mrs. Thatcher declined, thinking with a pensive smile of prunes being a luxury, and remembering a certain generous old fruit-garden she had known in other years yielding up its luscious treasures the whole summer through. But it did seem as though for Doc there was some elixir of vigor in the plain fare of these days; and Mrs. Thatcher felt her heart fill with a quick gladness as she watched her girl presently clad in dry garments, rosy and blithe after her ride in the rain, getting supper with those quick decided hands of hers.

The rain still increased, making stormy music on the double window pane of the snug little house. And Doc was thinking while she did her task, of a lovely passage in Isaiah, which had chimed in her ears with its soft music many a time as she watched the cattle, while the beloved home showed its steadfast roof dimly through the falling rain:

"*And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.*"

CHAPTER XV.

THE KNIGHTS START.

WHAT Lib Randolph was to do next was decided in the happiest way. It may not appear to you a particularly fortunate decision, but, from the Knights' standpoint, it was considered delightful. It brought Lib really into their circle and gave her a work which seemed, in some respects, the most knight-like of all.

For, when Jack Randolph and Mr. Tanner started for the Hills together, what should be more natural than that Mrs. Tanner should come to Steeplemix to stay with Lib, and should bring Lurline, Alice Griselda, Binzadella, and all the other instances of Mrs. Tanner's poetic expression. Lib thought of it first, after listening to a moving recital Doc had given of the dreary, dreary household. And, besides, wasn't Mrs. Tanner just like Lib?

"I'm strong," Lib said, holding out two healthy hands, "just as strong as can be. I can work at any kind of work; and Mrs. Tanner can help, and the children can help. Why, we can take in washing and get rich! The only trouble is there ain't half enough of the Tanners to fill the house. I hate this great empty house, Doc; do tell us how to fit it up for a cosey family. Do help me!"

Doc did help. She buzzed about like the craziest sort of a little brown bee. Gracie helped, and Floss helped. Floss contributed a good cushiony armchair, just as if she expected Mrs. Tanner to live in ease and luxury, hereafter, forever. Alice Scuppernong took the arrangement of one bed-room for her share of the work, and Allie Grinager took another.

It was a great, odd, empty house, for a fact. Nobody could guess whatever Jack Randolph built it

for any more than Lib could. I don't think there ever was a jollier house-cleaning than Lib had that fall. It did seem as though all Steeplemix meant to have a hand in it; for house-cleaning, you know, may and ought to mean a good deal more than just scrubbings and scrapings. It *can* mean all sorts of happy suggestions and "bright thoughts," and the constructing of cosinesses nobody ever thinks of except at this general "putting to rights."

Even Mr. Brushquick walked in to Lib's one morning with his pail in his hand, and coolly announced that he had been sent to whitewash the kitchen completely and also the parlor ceiling. Gracie explained afterwards, that there wasn't time for the girls to be spattering around with it. But the Knights, with their own little hands, helped Lib make the windows to glitter and the stoves to shine; and they put gay cushions into old gray chairs, and hung brackets on the clean walls, and contributed cosy strips of carpet for the two "model bed-rooms," and they made up pretty white little beds for the Tanner babies in the chamber. If they could just stop for one glorious old-fashioned Spinning in Lib's parlor! But that was not to be thought of.

Something glorious did happen, however, one afternoon when the girls had just finished the attic and

were gathered in a general state of dustiness and moppiness in an empty room, wishing something might be done with that also. Billy Thaxter walked through the open parlor and stopped at the foot of the stairs.

"Halloo! If you'd stop that hullabaloo just one minute so a fellow could get a word in, you'd hear something. There's something come for you."

A cluster of laughing faces peered down at Billy.

"Do you mean *after* us, or for us, or to us? Don't be so ambiguous, Billy Thatcher," said Doc.

"It came on the noon freight," continued Billy with dignity. "Freight paid. Marked 'Knights of the Round Table, at Steeplemix.' That's you, isn't it?"

"Bring it right here. Send it! Bring it, of course!" cried the Knights rushing down stairs pell-mell. "What can it be? Oh, it's some wretched 'sell!' Go away, Billy Thatcher!"

But Billy had already gone. He was yearning to know what it was himself. He soon returned with the village drayman, bringing a great square box which they deposited in the parlor. Billy had brought a hatchet and now proceeded to open the box before the assembled Knights, who stood, for at least ten minutes before this ceremony took place,

gazing with unutterable admiration upon that quaint inscription in great black letters. They thought the train-men must have wondered at *that* !

And anyway, who could have sent it? A dainty little letter, on a lovely sheet of tinted paper in a lovely square envelope, on the top of the contents of the box, made answer to this question.

"To the Knights of the Round Table at Steeplemix:

Greeting:

Day before yesterday we heard of you and your lovely work and why you have taken it up. Johnny Brunson brought the news first and it was quickly handed on to us. For love of the King we wanted to help, and we send you this as the first and best thing we could do. Please accept and do with it as seems best to you.

With our love and constant remembrance,

Annie Ware,

For Girls' Guild at St. Paul."

Now I don't think anybody could describe the feelings of the Knights at this juncture. That letter and this gift were to them such a sweet recognition. Billy swung his hat and gave three good loud cheers for

the Girls' Guild of St. Paul, which expressed everybody's feelings exactly, although the girls chased him away "for making such a racket." Then they dipped into the box.

"That royal Johnny Brunson!" exclaimed Doc; for the very first thing the girls lifted out was a pile of good warm bed-comfortables, such as were surely needed by the little Tanners and many other shivering little ones. "He just makes me think of the 'Poor Men of Lyons,'" she continued. "He rides and rides on that grimy old engine, and whenever he drops his loving watchword there's somebody sure to take it up."

The girls knew what she meant. They were so happy as to have the book which tells about the Poor Men of Lyons in one of the Sunday School Libraries. Perhaps that was one great reason why they entered so heartily into the spirit of this work.

It did seem as though there was a miraculous variety in the contents of that box. The Knights laughed to think how the Girls' Guild of St. Paul must have raced around to get it filled. There were flannel night-gowns and heaps of stockings, and lovely skeins of yarn, and comfortables, and towels, and pillow-cases. Primers, too, and a large dollie in a box with a beautiful wardrobe, building blocks, a

cunning little cap with a dear little boy's photograph in it, a Fourth Reader, and a warm cashmere wrapper for some poor, sick, shivering, prairie mother.

Was there ever anything lovelier than this? The Knights thought not.

And was the whole world going to respond at once, in some mysterious way, to Johnny Brunson's watchword? For, after this happy day box after box arrived from Girls' Guilds away off in Michigan, and Ohio, and Illinois; and a beautiful one came from a little society that called itself a "Fruit Mission," every member of which sent a dainty pound-sack of nice dried fruit prepared by her own hands and marked "From Children to Children."

O! there was some beautiful and joyous giving done in that gloomy winter, I can tell you. The Knights, with all their earnestness, could not possibly attend to the distribution of these boxes and were glad to call in the H. S. S. to advise. Harry Tosslop and Billy put rows of shelves all around Lib's parlor wall, and it was made a general depot for the Round Table stores. Aunt June and Mrs. Day and Lib were appointed almoners, and the H. S. S. kept a warm fire here at their expense the whole winter through.

Mrs. Tanner and the children rejoiced to come to

the warm shelter of Lib's house, and the faded woman seemed to pick up strength and courage immediately.

"Seems as though," she said, "things are being smoothed over to make the time go fast."

Alice Griselda and Lurline and Lycurgus were dressed comfortably from the wonderful first box and sent to the Steeplemix school. Lib did not once think of going over to the Grinagers to hold surreptitious concerts, but merrily clicked the bones every evening at home, and taught Alice Griselda, Binzadella, and the rest, "to go like the cornet, and the bass viol, and the complaining piccolo" in the most elegant manner — Mrs. Tanner listening entranced after her hard day's work.

The Knights did not forget Geordie Earle up in the Gentian Land in this busy time. Doc kept vivid chronicles of everything that happened, sending them out to the Earle place whenever any of Geordie's neighbors came down to Steeplemix. And Geordie sent back jolly letters that made the girls think she must be wonderfully courageous, out there all alone with the Busy-Bodies. For they knew, through Dr. Gibson, that her father was not, even yet, able to come home, and her mother was still with him.

The H. S. S. arranged everything to a charm, the Knights leaving for them, as Doc joyously declared, "the poetry of the whole thing." Particularly were the members of the H. S. S. who lived in the country a grand help; for they prepared in all the districts a warm welcome for the little teachers. In every family where the Home Studies were to be kept up and the teachers to make regular visits, a daily record was to be kept of the children's recitations and once a month forwarded to the H. S. S. for criticism and counsel. And the H. S. S. were to send a report of the whole to the State Superintendent, just to let him see what was being accomplished by these resolute prairie folks.

Everybody generously and heartily declared that the little Knights had hit upon the very thing to do; and everybody also resolved to get as much fun out of it as possible.

The Knights themselves looked like a company of high-bred young Esquimaux — "of the leading class," you know, — all gathered there in Lib's parlor on that last Saturday afternoon, when some were going out to the country with farmers who had come to the village after them, and others going to ride on ponies of their own, as Doc meant to do.

The weather was bitterly cold that day, so that the funny furry costumes were not one bit too warm.

No tied-back dresses were worn, I can assure you, but pretty princess dresses of warm flannel; no redundancy of skirts, just one of warm felt being worn, and that supported from the shoulders; and then there was an inner armor of bright flannel under all, with thick home-knit stockings and wool-lined boots, and long soft wristlets. There were no muffs, but fur gloves with cuffs fastened by rubber to the arm; and there were bright knit jackets for house-wear, and real buffalo overcoats, raglan style, for out-doors; "blizzard caps," like helmets, to close over the face if necessary, leaving place for bright eyes to peep out with no bothering veil about; and each girl had a good roomy knapsack for carrying teachers' materials, a pound of tea or a paper of crackers, if necessary. What was the fun of living in a glorious snapping-cold country, the Knights wanted to know, if you couldn't dress to suit?

That was a jolly day in Steeplemix. In fact, it did seem as though the harder the times grew the more folks picked up courage and the more they gloried in "the country," and wouldn't budge so much as an inch from it.

Not only were the Knights going out to-day, but box after box of loving gifts from the Girls' Guilds and the earnest little Fruit Missions were also going into the remote districts to make the country children's

eyes shine, and their mothers' eyes see a good deal plainer how they were going to get through this long winter. There was a feeling of tender comradeship striking through and through the little frontier community. An old farmer, with patched overcoat belted to his waist, elbowed through the crowded chattering room to set a jar of good sweet butter on the kitchen table.

"There now, sis," he said to Lib, "that's a jar of my woman's best butter. We've been providentially spared to what other folks be, and my woman said we ought to divide. She sets a store by your singin' in meetin', but she says to tell you that this here passin' notes to the boys riles her so she can't make head or tail o' the sermon. This here's for you, this butter, seein' you've a sort o' lonesome time before you; but you're to stop passin' notes. Where's that gal that's goin' out with me? Our Mirandy 'n Sammy are makin' dreadful calculations on the teacher comin' round."

Floss Day was the identical girl that was going out with him, and she was ready at his elbow, a little nervous, and, looking for all the world like a scared squirrel with her furs coming up around the pink cheeks, hiding the dainty ears, and about covering her forehead.

"Well, you *be* tucked up!" remarked her bluff

friend. "No need of bringin' along all my woman's old quilts."

No, indeed! The Knights didn't intend to be carried around under anybody's old quilts. They meant to ride bravely, getting good healthy sniffs of the keen air all the way.

Gracie went next. All the afternoon she had paced about in a lofty way in her great coat, part of the time chattering over "oral grammar lessons," and part of the time chanting, with a funny rapt air, from Sir Galahad's song:

> "I leave the plain, I climb the height,
> No branchy thicket shelter yields;
> But blessed forms in whistling storms
> Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields."

Gracie, of all beings, with the blue veins showing in her baby hands and the tears starting at the least brusque word! Gracie would gladly encounter some "blessed form" to carry her straight home to mother in about two days, was the general opinion, though not publicly expressed.

It did seem, presently, as though the raggedest man in the whole north-west had come for Gracie; and he had the poorest old horses and the bleakest old wagon, with loose rattling boards in the bottom under the heap of hay. There wasn't a bit of poetry in that outfit.

"*Now* do you think you had better try it, dear?"

whispered Gracie's mother wistfully. "It's a long way to ride in that cold wagon, and papa'll take you, Monday."

"But we all wanted to start the same day and begin early Monday," whispered Gracie back, with a suspicious quiver in her voice; and, bravely smiling, she added: "No thank you, mamma, I must go. The man would be dreadfully hurt if I didn't."

And Gracie bravely climbed up to the board seat. And, as she rode away, she laughingly chanted back at the girls:

> "I leave the plain, I climb the height,
> No branchy thicket shelter yields!"

"Now we'll see what sort of stuff Gracie *is* made of!" said Aunt June.

Perhaps it was just as well that Aunt June couldn't hear the remark the ragged man was making to Gracie at this moment.

"I reckon, sis, you're going to just about the meanest neighborhood in the whole country, although there's *some* real decent folks."

Doc went next, riding away gallantly at Ann's best pace, erect and resolute as a little Russian officer. Murray had already gone with the Ark, Billy accompanying him to bring back the oxen.

So the Knights were all "in the field" when Saturday evening came

CHAPTER XVI.

DOC RIDES HER CIRCUIT.

IT was dusk when Doc came at last to the Ark in its solitary-resting place. The lights of the houses in the district could be seen twinkling here and there at wide intervals, but the Ark itself seemed lonely enough to have been, as Murray triumphantly declared it was, the last house between Steeplemix settlement and Russian America.

The lamp was lighted on its cunning little bracket, and a supper of fragrant griddle-cakes was cooking

on the tiny stove, and the door of the Ark stood invitingly open. I don't think any doll's home or play-house ever was more delightful than the Ark was that evening, and Doc was "little girl" enough to thoroughly enjoy the littleness and snugness. Murray and Billy had banked it up, just as any prudent house-holder would do, high as the little window, and it would be perfectly comfortable, even in very cold weather, the boys were confident. The Ark, you must understand, had double walls. It had a real frame of scantling pieces, an outer and an inner wall of rough boards covered with building paper, while the space between was stuffed tightly with hay. It had a good, shingled roof also, lined with paper. The inside wall was neatly covered with some pretty but cheap paper, the sliding window had a bright red curtain, and the sleeping berths were hidden behind curtains cosily as you please. There was a fuel-box and wash-stand combined and neatly painted, a tall chest held provisions, while its lid was so contrived as to serve for an "extension table." A piece of bright zinc lined the wall behind the stove, and upon this hung the few cooking utensils belonging to the establishment. The floor was made air-tight and covered cosily with clean, old carpet and warm rugs. The two cushioned stools were boxes

which answered for closets. There was a mirror and a tiny bracket for pet books. There wasn't an inch of space not utilized in some way.

Murray had made frequent excursions to this camping-ground, and had cut with a scythe enough of the great strong slough-grass to make all the fuel they would need, and a little stack of the good upland hay stood near a snug little nest of a stable which the boys had built, mostly of hay, for Ann's benefit.

Murray was in high glee. "I've been all 'round the lake and up and down the run," he said, as he slipped a hot cake upon Doc's plate, "and there never was such a year for rats! Mind, that I expect to make at least forty dollars a month catching 'em. How's that cake, now, madam?"

"The cake is 'mellerin,'" said Doc, quoting Silas Wegg, "makes me feel 'most as if I might drop into poetry. Isn't this jolly!"— in a general way, with a glance of beaming approval around at the comfortable appointments of the Ark. "I don't believe it would be much more fun to go sailing 'round in a yacht."

Murray thought it would. "If *we* had a yacht, now, sis, where would we go, for instance?" he inquired, sitting down with his elbows on the table, for

a real cosy "wishing-and-if" talk with Doc, under the "mellowing" influence of the savory cakes, fragrant tea, and good fire.

"Puget Sound!" said Doc, "and Alaska, and everywhere, Murray! That's the way I'm going to teach geography. Take 'em yachting,— make believe, you know—and go winding all around, in and out, among the bays and inlets, and stopping at all the cunning little capes and breezy islands, in the jolliest way!"

Doc couldn't think of spending Sunday in the Ark. There were too many people with whom she was in a hurry to get acquainted. Hours before noon a quick little rap at the front door of one of those distant houses made a lull in the uproar of children's voices within, and then a freckled-faced little boy opened the door and beheld Doc standing on the step, with Ann close behind familiarly laying her nose on her mistress' solid little shoulder.

"The' aint anybody at home but us," said the little fellow, breathlessly. "Annie, 'n Mandy, 'n Danny, *and* Jary *and* me. Paw 'n maw's gone over to Sanderses."

"To meeting?" questioned Doc.

"No-oh!" the boy laughed out, "they don't have

meeting to *Sanderses.* They go a-visiting to *Sanderses* 'most every Sunday when Sanderses don't come here. And maw went over to-day to see Mis' Sanders about the new teacher."

Doc cheerfully informed the children that the new teacher stood before them, her very self, and that they were the very individuals she had come to see. There was a social time, the very first thing all the children assisting in the ceremony of stabling Ann. The poor little room, kitchen, parlor, and dining-room all in one, was in a sad state of disorder, but Doc briskly took off her coat, hung up coat and cap on a nail, deposited her knapsack on the table, and then made a sort of cheery proclamation, to the effect that this was going to be a "regular, splendid, delightful Sunday," and that the floor must be swept, the chairs immediately set back, and a rousing fire built and kept a-going.

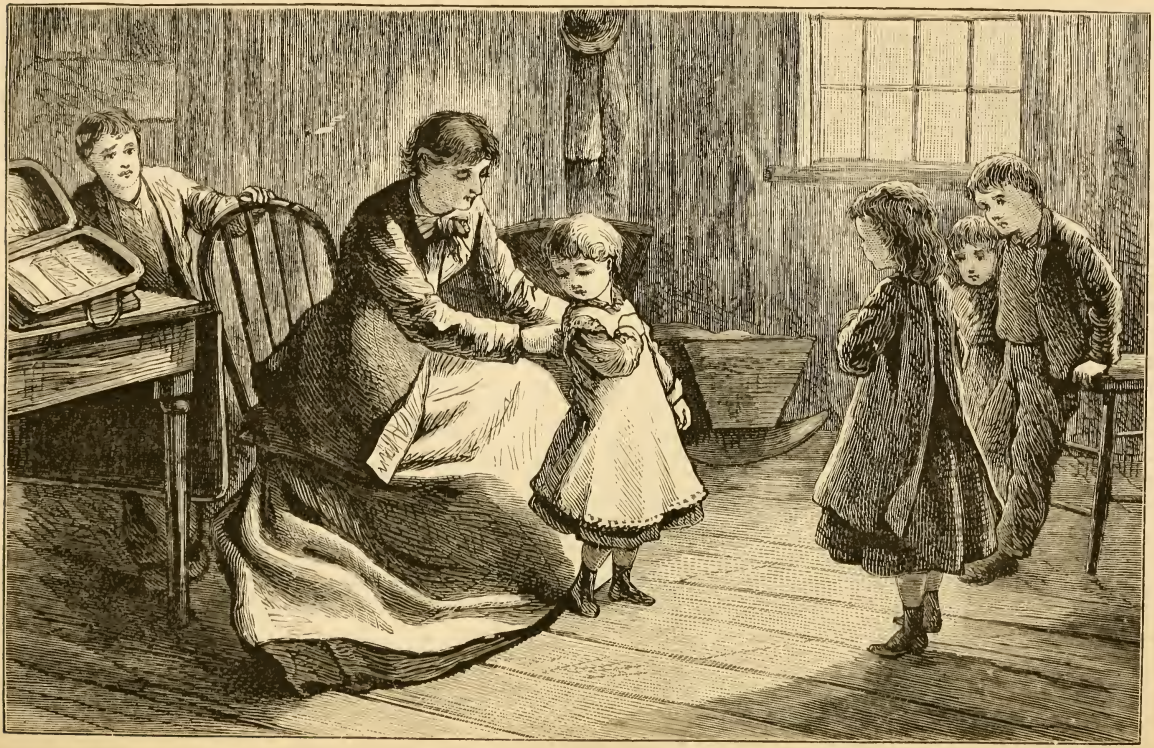
"I aint got any clean apron for Sunday," chirped the littlest girl, "'cause mine white one got so little, maw she gave it to the baby. And she didn't have time to wash this one yesterday."

"Well, then, you're just the girlie I've been looking for," remarked the new teacher, beginning to briskly brush and braid the girlie's flaxen hair into funny bright little tails to keep it out of her eyes. "Just

wait till I open my knapsack." The girlie waited, but with very perceptible little wiggles of delighted expectation, under the operator's hands. As for the other children, a real "meetin' silence" had fallen upon them, in the presence of that mysterious knapsack.

It was soon opened, and out came the dearest little Gabrielle apron, of white Marseilles, edged with lovely "Hamburg," and buttoned from the hem to the dainty neck, clear up the back, with a glistening row of fairy pearl buttons. Such a fairy apron! compared to the one the girlie was wearing that minute. That was of dingy, dark, big-flowered calico, and had patches on its elbows, and the sleeves were too short, and the front breadth not a whit too clean. And oh, if all the Girl's Guilds everywhere, and all the Round Tables, and all the Knights could only have been mice in the wall for this one minute, and conveniently stationed behind that particularly large crack under the bottom pantry-shelf, peering out into the Mayhew kitchen when this wonderful pearly-pure little flower of an apron made its appearance! It was a perfect fit, it was indeed. I almost think there is a Providence which looks after the "fit," in the loveliest way, in all such cases. Girlie Mayhew didn't shout or chatter. She just laughed one little soft, fluttering

laugh that was almost a sob, and her little face flushed deep, then turned white, and she stood there mute and trembling with delight, while Doc buttoned up the fairy apron. And you would have wondered to see what a real little rosebud girlie she was, and how the dainty white fabric brought out the pink in her cheeks, and the sparkles in her eyes, and the shine in her flossy hair! The biggest little sister just gasped one long gasp of admiration, then she suddenly made a dive at the white-robed girlie, who was nearly as large as she was, and with one mighty effort lifted her into a chair, and settled her well, and smoothed her down, and folded her chubby hands for her and even looked to see if the two stout little feet in their old shoes were poked out evenly side by side, just as if the white girlie were some lovely, precious, helpless little baby. And then she stood off to admire the "*tout ensemble*," of this radiant tableau, this unusual bit of Sunday whiteness. And yet, Doc was sure that she had seen this biggest little sister pulling the girlie's hair and boxing her ears in the general confusion at her arrival. It did seem sad because there were no shoes for the boy's bare feet, and none to take the place of the little girls' old ragged ones. But a pair of bright, warm, home-knit stockings for each one came out of that wonderful



"She stood there mute and trembling with delight."— Page 242.

knapsack, and there was a new slate and a box of pencils, and a warm cap for Danny Mayhew, and last, but not least, a cunning white sack of fragrant peaches, dried with all the sweetness in, and labeled, "From Katie and Annie Pierce, Sweet-briar Station, Ohio, to the Round Table, at Steeplemix." Weren't those peaches put on to stew, in a twinkle! A bowl of dessert for the Sunday dinner was something to rejoice over, I can tell you, when you'd expected to have nothing but bread and stewed turnips. And while the peaches simmered in their own luscious golden juice, and filled the room with a fragrance that made every one of the little Mayhews feel hungrier than ever, they made up lovely word-pictures of how Katie Pierce and Annie Pierce looked, and what they studied, and how they hurried home from school every evening and got up early every morning to attend to those peaches. Danny Mayhew thought a letter of thanks ought to be written, and the new teacher strongly inclined to that opinion. But the biggest little sister, whose name was Mandy, thought it would be nicer to wait, and to write no letter at all.

"This is how it will be," she said, making severe gestures to hush the others, as they all sat around the stove sniffing the steam of the delicious peaches.

"This is how it will be," she said again, "Annie Pierce and Katie Pierce will forget all about it, after a while. And some day — oh, a good many years from this — a lady will come walking into Sweetbriar Station and inquire the way to Mr. Pierce's — a lady all in silk, with a gold watch and diamonds, and her bonnet all covered with flowers and ostridge plumes — and all at once that lady will go walking into Mr. Pierce's, and find Katie Pierce and Annie Pierce weeping for the death of their father and because they are now very poor and must leave their beautiful home. Then," said Mandy, with a lofty flourish, "the lady will look at her gold watch and say, 'I have but a few minutes to stay. You, Annie and Katie Pierce, once sent a present of delightful fruit to some poor children who couldn't get any. I have come to reward you. Here, Annie, take this watch. Katie, you take this diamond necklace. And here is a purse full of gold. This is so that you shall never leave your home. Farewell.' And the lady will be me," added Mandy, looking around with an air which seemed to say, "That settles it!" And it was such a very gorgeous plan that it astonished ever the owner of the wonderful knapsack.

"That would be a beautiful plan if it weren't for the dreadful suspense Katie Pierce and Annie Pierce

will be in all this while," said Doc, as she sat in the midst of the little circle. "Now, suppose I had a piece of beautiful white paper in my knapsack, and suppose I had some excellent pencils, and suppose we should make a picture of little girlie Mayhew, for the ones that sent the apron, and a picture of all of you sitting around the stove, to send to Annie Pierce and Katie Pierce. Wouldn't they be glad!"

This was a delightful plan, too, particularly as everybody felt sure that all the necessary implements *were* in Doc's knapsack. And Danny Mayhew remarked that *he* could make pictures, splendid ones, of thrashing machines and reapers, and soldiers and Indians. And he was immediately furnished with pencil and paper and advised to make one of his very finest threshing machines to send to Katie Pierce and Annie Pierce.

Then Doc made a little sketch of all the little Mayhews sitting around the stove, with Mandy's arm put stiffly around little girlie Mayhew, for all the world like an old daguerreotype, and Mandy smiling as sweetly as ever she could. And when the picture was done, Doc wrote a letter, and every one of the children signed it, not excepting Mandy, and the picture was put in and Danny's threshing machine was put in, and I know it was sent and Annie Pierce

and Katie Pierce are the happy possessors of it to this day.

After this, came stories, wonder stories from the Bible, more wonderful and more beautiful than any Hans Anderson ever knew. There was the story of Joseph, and Doc never *could* tell that without her own lip quivering and her eyes growing misty, and cheeks burning when she came to Joseph's splendid triumph. As for little girlie Mayhew, something funny had to be said immediately to keep the tears from dropping on that new apron, on account of Joseph's trials. There was the story about the wonderful long journey from Egypt, Doc standing up in the midst of that breathless little group to tell it. And she described the lovely land those tired people came to at last, with its woods and hills, and clear springs and brooks and restful little valleys, and how the two dark men who had been sent out to look at it came striding triumphantly back to camp with those great, lustrous, glorious grapes of Eshcol swinging from the branch laid over their strong shoulders! And she told about the Feast of Booths, seven whole days of camping out and picnicking every year, a glorious, glad outdoor's time, out in the beautiful Palestine weather. Didn't the little Israelites look forward to that Feast the whole year through! And weren't they grateful

to the good God for ordaining such a festival! And weren't those lovely, safe homes the Lord had brought them to, after the terrible journey!

Last of all she taught them a jubilee song, with a joyous clapping of hands.

The little Mayhews looked mournful when it came time for the "teacher" to go, but Doc cheerfully admonished them to get up very early in the morning, and have the chores all done and the books all gathered up and neatly arranged, for to-morrow's work was to begin bright and early and in earnest: just the happiest sort of work they ever did.

Ann went gaily over the prairie, till suddenly Doc reined her up with a jerk and an exclamation. "Ann," she said, breathlessly, "I do believe that's Gracie Wood, yonder. On foot, too! What can she be doing away up here? Her district is six miles from mine." It didn't take long for Ann to carry Doc up to a wavering, stumbling, little figure in a great coat, its cap pushed to the back of its head, its yellow hair perpetually blown into its eyes, and half blinding it. And it wasn't an apparition, it *was* Gracie; and as Doc rode up, she dropped right down on the hard ground in a miserable little heap. A pitiful little face looked up at Doc, eyes red with crying, cheeks streaked with tears and dust.

"It's me," said a plaintive little voice, and the face tried to smile.

"I see it's you," said Doc, as she dismounted.

> "'I leave the plain, I climb the height,
> No branchy thicket shelter yields,'

— what's the rest? — here's your "blessed form," madam, at your service —

> 'But blessed forms in whistling storms,
> Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields,' —

that's it, isn't it?"

"You're a — wicked girl — making fun — of people — that are — *in earnest*," wailed Gracie. "If you were tired as me, you wouldn't laugh. I started to walk home to mamma, and I lost my way," almost breaking down with a sob that *would* come. "And I've walked and walked — and I thought I could find Geordie's, maybe, and I couldn't. I just found two old houses and both of them were empty — I don't see what people want to go off and leave the country for — I know I'd have more grit than that!" And Gracie sobbed hysterically at the very thought of the dreary, disappointing, empty houses.

"You poor, little, ridiculous knight," said Doc, "climb up on Ann, this minute! I shall have to take you back to Mayhew's. I should love to have you see the Ark, but we couldn't get around early enough

to-morrow morning, you see, one of us having to walk. What dreadful thing has happened, Gracie? But there! you needn't tell one word till you're rested, and had your face washed, Gracie dear."

Gracie obediently "climbed up," and Doc trudged along briskly beside Ann, back to the Mayhew place. And not only had Mr. and Mrs. Mayhew returned since Doc's departure, but Geordie Earle had unexpectedly arrived, and came running to meet Doc and Gracie.

All along the way from Steeplemix, the Ragged Man had exercised his genius in describing the meanness of his "deestrick." He really seemed to feel a pride in the fact that he belonged to such a distinguished community. He didn't even believe in the Sanfords, and Gracie had felt sure that they were very nice; for Mrs. Sanford, a motherly, pleasant-spoken woman had been at Mrs. Wood's in consultation with her and Aunt June about this very work. Gracie was to ride one of Mr. Sanford's horses and expected to go to Mrs. Sanford's the very first night. Mr. Sanford was away from home, and would be away all winter, and the Ragged Man, being the nearest neighbor, had been persuaded by Mrs. Sanford to go after Gracie.

It was only seven o'clock when they reached the Sanford place, but the family was in bed. The wind blew cold, while Gracie and her companion waited on the step. It seemed a drearily long time before any one stirred within in answer to their rapping, but at last Mrs. Sanford came to the door, and seemed surprised, and said it was so late they had given up looking for Gracie, and they always went to bed early to save keeping up fires. Then Gracie was ushered into a cold, dark room, and sat there alone while Mrs. Sanford went to the barn to twist some hay to make a fire for getting her supper. Mrs. Sanford was very kind, but it seemed so dreadful to be the means of her getting out of bed to go out in the cold and twist hay! And after Gracie had had supper, the children's sleeping arrangements had to be "changed 'round" to make room for her, and one of them cried and said he "wished that old teacher 'd never come," and then his mother punished him with a strap — in his night-gown, too. And the bed was a "humpy hay bed." And Gracie found out that the children hadn't *any* books to study. They'd "learned all their old books by heart," and they muttered that "nobody was a-going to make them study lessons to home."

Gracie lay awake long after they were asleep, cry-

ing, out of sheer loneliness and homesickness, and made up her mind that the minute morning came she would start for home, and when she got there she would stay there, and people might think what they pleased!

Mr. and Mrs. Mayhew heard Gracie tell this story that Sabbath afternoon, and they seemed to consider it a prodigious joke. They were kindly, out-spoken, English-born people, whose laughter was of the heart-whole wholesome kind, and didn't hurt you in the least. Gracie brightened under the influence of their cordial faces even while she told her story. "Bless you, child," said Mrs. Mayhew, "you needn't mind Jim Potter. If you just leave him out, there isn't a nicer neighborhood in the whole North than that one you're in. Folks are all far apart, but they're *neighbors*. And Mrs. Sanford is one of the best of 'em. So's Mrs. Stevens; and all the others are looking for you, and they'll make you feel at home, *if you want* to feel so. Don't you give up. Martin will carry you right down to Mrs. Sanford's to-morrow morning bright and early, and you just take right hold,—it'll do you good and them, too."

Gracie decided that she would "try it over," with cheeks flushing to think she had been such a baby.

Then she and Doc and Geordie had a delightful

little visit out on the front door-step, Doc and Geordie in their wraps, all ready to start home.

Geordie had quite a thrilling little story to tell. It all happened, she said, one dreary day last week.

Karl was rolled up in a quilt, crying because he had to stay in it to have his trousers patched. Max was in his worst spells, quoting about the vision of Mirza and Hafed and the horrid "chance world." Nan and Laurie were quarreling and wouldn't stop, and Geordie was crying, herself, and thinking she could *not* stay out here alone with the busy bodies another day. All at once she "looked up through her tears" and beheld a large easy carriage at the door, and Papa Earle in it with cushions and shawls all around him, and Laurie scrambling up to kiss his white, glad face. Mamma Earle was in the carriage, and auntie. "Yes, auntie; and auntie says she is going to turn me out racing over the country with the rest of you," said Geordie. "Isn't she glo-ri-ous?"

The Knights thought she certainly was a woman of whom one could approve. They said so, and then bade each other merry good-bys.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUNNY DAYS.

"WHAT a rosy girl! You're mother wouldn't know you. Hurry right in to supper. Stevie's speared some splendid fish in our little lake out east of the farm. I'm so glad you've got here in time to have some."

Mrs. Sanford was out watering her cows at the

barn-well as Gracie rode up one evening after a sunny and unseasonably warm winter day. Even the boy, who had wished "that old teacher'd stayed away," rushed out from his hay-twisting in the barn to give her a welcome.

"I've been away up to Doc's Ark on a visit," said Gracie as she dismounted. "I went from Tomkins' up there. But I'm not one bit tired. I believe I could ride to Alaska — and eat a white bear. Stevie, there's another big box over at Tomkins' from one of those blessed Girls' Guilds. It had some new slates in it. Think of that! And I've brought you one. Sammy Tomkins is learning to draw "zig-zag mouldings" beautifully. I've brought his slate to show you; and I've brought letter blocks to teach baby with."

Twice in a month the Knights all met in one place to compare notes, and Doc gave them drawing-lessons; the very ones she had learned of Miss Paul, and just such as are taught in all the best city schools. And Aunt June had given them some ideas about vocal training, with breathing exercises and vigorous arm-movements; and "teacher's day" was a vivid, glad, wide-awake day everywhere I can tell you, with these live lessons. There wasn't any lonely moping over lonely books.

"Just see what a blow I can take on my chest," said Stevie proudly, squaring himself into position and counting for his own movements, "one, two, three, four! I can take a longer breath than Aleck, or Roy, or mother even. And Roy can sing the 'Sca' beautfiully, like as you told us, all in one breath."

Those fish were delicious and Stevie was proud of them.

"If it's clear to-night," he said, "I just wish Miss Wood would come and see me spear fish. It's splendid to stand on the ice and wait till a reg'lar old emperrer comes along past the hole, grand as you please, and then nab him!"

Gracie thought she would really like to try "nabbing emperrers" herself, but a glance at the sky as she rose from supper rather chilled her enthusiasm. A long, low, blue cloud stretched ominously across the north-western sky, and the wind was scraping up the fallen snow and sending it forward in a steady horizontal way that Stevie said "meant business."

Mrs. Sanford's baby was cross and peevish, too, and Gracie felt that she ought to make the house tidy for the evening.

"I'm 'fraid I've let baby out bare-headed too much to-day," Mrs. Sanford said anxiously, "it seemed so moderate-like and he so tired of being shut in."

Baby was certainly dangerously sick. His throat was sore, his face burning hot and pulse high, and ever and anon came the dreadful croupy cough.

"Oh, only *must* it happen when Mr. Sanford's gone!" mourned the frightened mother. "Eight miles from the doctor and no neighbor woman near'n two miles, and *she* no account in sickness! What shall I do?"

"Mamma always puts a cold wet cloth on my throat when it's sore and warm dry ones over it," said Gracie as she knelt and took baby's cold feet in her warm hands, shuddering at the icy touch.

"I won't hear of water-cures!" exclaimed Mrs. Sanford. "He's too sick. I might kill him. Oh! what shall I do?"

Gracie was sure that her mamma cured "dreadful things" with cold water and warm flannels, and bathing and rubbing, and it all seemed so comfortably and easily done. But then, she had rooms with a pleasant even warmth and no doors opening and shutting; and she had plenty of soft warm blankets and flannel and linen, and she knew just how. Poor Mrs. Sanford didn't "know just how"; and, sad to say, neither did Gracie. She was afraid to insist. She looked out at that ominous stretching cloud for one silent minute and then said cheerily:

"Don't worry, mamma Sanford. Stevie and I'll

saddle Dick and I'll ride over to ask Mr. Potter to go for the doctor; and if he can't go, why, *I'll* go."

"You could stay in Steeplemix over night if you went," suggested Mrs. Sanford: "And you're dressed so warm — Oh, if I'd only sent this afternoon for the doctor! But I thought baby was mostly *cross* and not sick."

The frost was gathering like plush on the kitchen windows when Gracie started. Stevie, with chattering teeth, was getting a great heap of hay into the house to last for fuel in case a storm should arise to shut them in. The iron chimney on the little house boomed like a signal-gun as the strong rising wind struck and shook it. Away went the sturdy horse with the little furry figure a-top, flying swiftly through the drifts that were whitening the way.

Mr. Porter was not at home. He had gone to Steeplemix that day to haul hay from his stacks to sell, and, now that the storm was rising, his family did not look for his return that night.

"Now Dick," said Gracie as she turned her horse, "we've got to go to Steeplemix, and Doctor Gibson must face it to save that baby. If he doesn't, or can't, it will not be our fault."

Colder and colder grew the air; the wind, still rising steadily, scooped up great cakes of crusted snow

hurling them like lightning past her. A fine shooting powder of snow began to come from the savage north, each grain like a tiny stinging spear.

"I can bear it if I don't get lost," Gracie thought.

But the keen cold was chilling her even through the great warm coat and queer "pack shoes." And what if she should take the wrong road! It was not a safe thing, Gracie knew, to be lost on a great sparsely settled prairie in a driving winter storm. She could scarcely see any road at all. She must trust to Dick. The sky was not all cloudy. Sometimes, through the black clouds, she could see the moon with its storm-rings and "dogs" on each side of it, and it seemed to have a strangely terrible look shining pallidly up there with the shooting white storm below. Even under her thick mittens her hands were numb with the cold. She knew, at this time, what a distance she had come and about where she was.

But the storm thickened, and the horse snorted in the stinging, whirling snow as he gallopped. Thoughts of her mother's warm parlor began to come into Gracie's mind as she rode. Even the warm rug by the hearth came distinctly before her eyes with all its color and softness. She could see her own bed with its soft white pillows and blankets.

On and on she rode through the wild night, thinking of long-forgotten evenings by the home-fire and of all the home-light and comfort.

Sometimes, in her numbness, there would come a strange fleeting vision of a dead baby out in the snow, or a sorrowful little burial out on the frozen prairie. Then she would determine to drive away these fantastic pictures, and would resolutely push on and try to think clearly, only to feel them coming and coming again. Had Dick lost the way? It seemed an age since she had started. The wind should be at her back if she was on the right road. It never changed in these storms without a preliminary lull. And was she not almost facing it now? Gracie tried to pull the rein, but the bewildered horse did not feel the touch of those numb little hands.

"If it is all over," she thought then, "they will know I have done my best. I *haven't* been a baby."

Suddenly the horse stumbled sharply and she fell. One little sting of pain, and then she felt at rest. The horse stood by her but she did not think of him. The warm home pictures came and she did not try to drive them away.

Gerty and Rhoda Vincent had gone to the very loneliest and remotest districts. They wrote glowing

letters home to the girls in their church in St. Paul about this queer new work of theirs; and one of these letters caused a sensation.

"You can't guess," it began, "what a music the storm makes away out here. Not the common every-day blow, but the big three days' hurricane that only comes once in a great while just to show what a good honest storm is. We don't travel around very much when that takes place; and the snow goes shooting by like a phantom white wall. Your eye-brows grow shaggy with frost the minute you peep out of doors. The wind doesn't make any little trivial yelps and gulps and shrieks. It comes with a long grand solemn roll that, queerly, makes you think of the measure in Evangeline:

> 'Loud from its rocky caverns the deep-voiced neighboring ocean
> Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.'

"And what do you think happened here last week in the storm, and who do you think was shut up here through it all? Of course you can't guess. If I tell you *you* mustn't tell. One was Mr. Gregg of Steeplemix, and the other gentleman was — well, he *said* he was 'Mr. Fiske;' but, girls, *I* happen to know, and so does Gerty.

"They came right in out of the storm the first

evening of it; and, girls, they carried in from the sleigh one of our knights, Gracie Wood, that dear little 'blind spinner' with the golden hair, not *quite* frozen to death. But it was *almost* a tragedy! Mr. Gregg's ears were frozen but nobody paid any attention to *that.* They had come near losing their own way, and their horses had almost trodden upon the little thing lying there in the snow in her great coat. The snow and the furry Arctic suit was what saved her. I tell you we were in a commotion. We bathed her in kerosene, and rubbed her hands and feet, and poured hot peppery tea down her throat and we didn't dare to stop to take breath for a time that seemed ages. But at last she opened her eyes, and 'Mr. Fiske' said 'Thank God' in that hearty voice of his, and I said "Amen" out loud and earnest, I did indeed. And the first weak wavering words she said were:

"'I wanted her to put wet cloths on baby's throat and she wouldn't, and I was afraid. And, oh dear! hasn't *anybody* gone for the doctor?'

"That told the whole story. And I saw tears running down 'Mr. Fiske's' cheeks. Mr. Gregg said it was a mere accident that any of them got through safely. But 'Mr. Fiske' said 'no.' Accidents like that don't happen. God attends to *such* 'acci-

dents' he says. Mr. Gregg and Mr. 'Fiske' pretended to have been out looking at the country. 'Looking at the country' in the dead of winter! Likely story, wasn't it?

"The people at this particular house are very destitute. Mr. Gregg and 'Mr. Fiske' had to sleep on the floor under their own buffalo robes; and there was nothing for their supper but potatoes and some crackers Gerty and I had bought. Next day 'Mr. Fiske' asked Mr. Blake the kindest carefullest questions. And he talked with the children about their lessons, and I saw the tears in his eyes as he looked at the rags tied around their feet in place of shoes. Johnny cried while they were here because he hadn't any spelling-book. Girls! two days after that, when these gentlemen had gone and had taken our poor little knight with them back to Steeplemix, a whole package of nice new school-books was sent out for the children; and on the fly-leaf of Johnny's spelling-book was lightly pasted a bright new ten dollar greenback, and on the fly-leaf was written: 'From John Fiske with much esteem.'

"Just as if *I* didn't know that man was the Governor of this state! Haven't I heard him speak hundreds of times? Don't I always read his speeches? And did we *ever* have a governor by the name of

Fiske? And does he think he can go around the country finding out things for himself and not have anybody guess? But I'd just like him to know what a beautiful little romance it has all made for Johnny, almost as good as a German fairy story indeed. Governors in disguise are not going round every day, you must understand, in such a fatherly, sympathetic way."

I don't think this mouse-in-the-wall kept that secret very closely. It speedily became one of the favorite legends rehearsed at Round Table Conclaves; and it is told with delight to this day in the Gentian Land.

Mrs. Sanford, finding that no doctor could reach her house in that stormy night, did try the despised "water-cure" after all and it relieved her baby speedily. But Gracie did not escape so well. The next Round Table Conclave had to be held in Gracie's own room; for she had been too weak to leave it after that ride in the storm. But her blue eyes sparkled triumphantly over the assurance from Mrs. Sanford that she had saved the baby after all, and would be always loved and respected for that. And, sitting there in her easy-chair, like a little queen among the knights, Gracie read a beautiful, kind letter from "Mr. Fiske," complimenting her for her courage and praising all the knights for their work. Nobody could

describe the state of mind the knights were in then. It was unutterable and indescribable; for that letter *wasn't signed by 'Mr. Fiske'* by any means. And Gertie and Rhoda Vincent both shrieked out when they heard it:

"There now! didn't we tell you?"

Doc's first Sunday among the children was a sprinkling of seed that quickly bore good fruit. The little ones had been so delighted that Mr. Mayhew suggested having all the neighbors come in with their children "for a good sociable Bible talk." They did gather in. Everybody was hungry for it. And Doc and Geordie and Gracie put their heads together and resolved that the Y. M. C. A. must help, and they sent urgent word.

The Y. M. C. A. responded nobly. Even Jerrold Shaw came out to help talk and pray and sing; and through it all the Bible was the watchword and talisman and inspiration for each one. Jerrold had given up the pulpit and was learning the very trade Doc had suggested. And, now that he had dared to be sincere, he was having a new religious experience, very practical, joyous and comforting. The desire to do good he was beginning to see grew right along with the doing.

Doc came home one evening in the early spring to

hear good news. Miss Paul was in Steeplemix with Gracie's Aunt June, the two having come together from Chicago whither Aunt June had gone to meet her friend. Just to think that all this while Doc and Miss Castleton had loved a "mutual friend," each without suspecting the other's knowledge of such an individual. Never had Ann gallopped faster than this happy evening when she carried Doc to Steeplemix in answer to a summons in the clear, familiar hand-writing she loved and remembered so well.

A grave, sweet woman stood there in the dusk — how good it was of Aunt June not to go and set the lamps ablaze! — and she held out her hands and said softly:

"Dorrie!"

And the first words that Doc could say were:

"You said you could do it! You said something beautiful would happen! And now you've come for that! I always knew you would!"

She was thinking, you see, of the thing which, long ago, Miss Paul had said might some day happen — the carrying out of that plan for "building homes instead of hospitals." That was just like Doc, speaking out her thoughts bluntly, expecting Miss Paul to understand as a matter of course. Miss Paul did understand. It was to her the sweetest welcome.

"Thank you, dear," she said with quick answering smile, still holding the solid, warm, little hands. "And you have remembered all the rest, too? You seemed almost in danger once of becoming a real little Philistine, — Matthew Arnold's kind you know. But I don't see anything selfish, nor envious, nor vehement here. I see a clear, good, earnest face; and I wish to thank you, dear, for your loving sympathy and comradeship for one that I love and have been looking for all these long years."

Miss Paul's voice trembled a little; but she looked down at Doc with clear, glad, unfaltering eyes. What could she mean? Surely *Miss Castleton* hadn't needed Doc's "sympathy and comradeship" particularly.

"Of course you can't guess, childie," put in Aunt June, coming forward and drawing Doc's arm around her own waist, "so I shall just tell the whole story, straight and clear.

"Months ago, while Lib Randolph and I worked together taking care of your Girls' Guild boxes and Round Table stores and grew O, so well-acquainted, I guessed that right here in Steeplemix, lived the daughter of Miss Paul's own sister, from whom, by a chain of hard circumstances, she had long ago been separated. That sister died somewhere in the west

Miss Paul knew; and she has been searching and searching for the little baby daughter of whom she had just once vaguely heard. Can you guess, now? I sent a photograph, and I wrote and wrote to Miss Paul, and she wrote and wrote to me; and now she has come to see the original of that picture, and has found her, and claims her, and rejoices over her. Gracie!" — slightly raising her voice, — "bring my *denouement* out here! Let her speak for herself!"

Gracie brought the "denouement" from the dining-room where "it" had been kept in a most undignified and undramatic manner, lurking behind the door. And the said "denouement" consisted of nothing more nor less than Lib Randolph her very own self, advancing to meet Doc with a strange new dignity and gladness in her face.

"You look like her! You really do!" cried Doc, surveying Lib with a queer, critical scrutiny mingled with blank astonishment. "I never could understand why it was that your mouth and eyes puzzled me so — in your good spells, you know, Lib. Now I see."

"I never had any good spells to speak of till you helped me," said Lib.

Even Mrs. Tanner and Barrilla Nelson and Alice Griselda and Binzadella Edda, and all the other chil-

dren with the beautiful, dignified names came over to dinner presently.

It seemed as though Miss Paul in her joy wanted to gather the whole world in. Nobody must be left out in the cold that happy evening. And Mrs. Tanner had written some verses in honor of the occasion which she meekly put into Lib's hands, and which were read by Miss Paul without the least twinkle of a sarcastic smile.

In all the following summer Miss Paul worked as never woman worked before. It was a work in which others helped, but in which she was the moving power, the life-giving spirit. It was all steadily, quietly, perseveringly done. And the whole work Miss Paul simply called her little "Cup of Cold Water."

Land was bought and an ideal farm-village planned out on the green mountain prairie. To this Miss Paul brought a community of the poorest city poor and began to help them build their homes. And when Mr. Tanner and Lib's father returned in the spring it was to find Mrs. Tanner, too, settled in one of these houses, in her own right and provided by Miss Paul with all the work she could do. Doc declared that neither of the two adventurers were

needed here; but some people seemed very glad to see them nevertheless. Even Lillie Rose found that working with and for Miss Paul was far more interesting than scribbling in a sentimental journal. That rousing, quiet, straightforward earnestness was contagious. It showed from whom Doc had learned some of her ways. Teachers were needed for her people and the knights rallied around her. She had brought a splendid training-school to their very door.

Late in the summer, when God had lifted the plague from the land and the fields were shining with golden grain, the great state blossomed all over with grateful Harvest Homes; harvest-home music, harvest-home sermons, harvest-home beauty in the churches.

It was after one of these rejoicings in Steeplemix that a little group of ladies lingered to enjoy the harvest-home pictures with which the walls were made to glow and shine. The knights, looking back at them with a merry laugh, dubbed them the Convention of Aunts; for it did seem as though the Aunts had come from near and from far, from the east and from the west, to sit down together in this place of rejoicing.

There was Geordie Earle's beloved "Auntie" all in raiment of sweeping silk and dainty laces; "Aunt Scup," angular and stately as Geordie's auntie was

dimpled and gracious; Aunt June shrewd, piquant, and petite; sweetest and wisest of all, there was Elizabeth Paul.

"Things never would have gone on so smoothly without the Aunts," Doc sagely said as the knights stood lightly chatting in the church door.

"Never!" echoed Geordie Earle.

Lib Randolph was silent; but the light in her face expressed her thought. Lib's cause for grateful rejoicing was deepest of all.

It is not likely that the Knights will ever go out again on a similar winter's mission. The prairies are dotted with new school-houses and laced with long lines of green waving trees; the fields have teemed with golden harvests since that bitter winter. But the good results of that work are still felt in many ways. Geordie Earle looks back to it as the happiest winter she ever knew, and Geordie has seen real gala times since then. The H. S. S. keep up their meetings still, because it is "such a rest," such a "pleasant variety" in the mothers' lives, and helps them to understand what the teachers are doing for their children.

And Gracie — you never could guess what Gracie has done. But it is what I wish five hundred girls were willing to do this minute. She has gone to the

Washington Agency to teach in the Indian schools. Everybody begged her not to do it, but Gracie felt that she "must." She never has been homesick one minute; she loves her work. And I don't believe the Phillippians or the Ephesians or the Corinthians ever looked for letters from the Apostle Paul with more eagerness, than the Steeplemix folks look for these long, scribbly, loving letters from little Gracie Wood.

Doc has, with Miss Paul, taken up the old-time lessons. Jimmy Reid, too, has received from her affectionate guidance, and she expects him some day to become a master carver and designer.

If you should find, one of these days, beautiful illustrations in your pet magazine from Doc's own hand you need not be surprised. Doc is determined that *they shall be there*, and so is Miss Paul; and the prairie views will be more beautiful than any others that ever were made. Not one of Doc's lonely days on the prairie, Miss Paul declares, has ever been wasted.

JUST READY.

THE CHAUTAUQUA GIRLS AT HOME.

By *Pansy*. 12mo. Illustrated. 1 50

'Pansy knows girls, and has the gift of story-telling, by which the hard facts of every-day life take on a charm as of fairy-land. No one can look into 'The Chautauqua Girls' without feeling the subtle fascination of its pictures of quiet life, and being drawn into warm sympathy with the four friends who long to form noble characters. They have been won to a love of Jesus by attending a camp-meeting at Chautauqua; but they find it so hard to be true to their new impulses, and to carry the spirit of the Bible into every-day life, that the story of their struggles, disheartening failures relieved by partial successes, is very human and full of genuine pathos. It is good summer reading, for beguiling away hours, and inspiring with generous purposes."

"Pansy's last book, 'The Chautauqua Girls at Home,' is as fresh and inspiring as a fine morning in June. The four friends, Marion, Ruth, Flossy and Eurie, are of genuine flesh and blood, with the petty weaknesses that flesh is heir to, and the noble aspirations that come at times to every high-minded girl. Their unlikeness to each other in character and social position, and their mutual helpfulness in all sorts of difficulties, make a delightful story; instructive as well as fascinating. One finds it hard to lay down the book after beginning the first chapter. It will find many readers who will welcome its stimulating power to high aims in life, and to patience and hope in fighting hard battles."

Boston: D. LOTHROP & CO., Publishers.

MISS JULIA A. EASTMAN is one of the most popular of our modern writers.

YOUNG RICK. By *Julia A. Eastman.* Large 16mo. Twelve illustrations by Sol Eytinge. $1 50

A bright, fascinating story of a little boy who was both a blessing and a bother.—*Boston Journal.*

The most delightful book on the list for the children of the family, being full of adventures and gay home scenes and merry play-times. "Paty" would have done credit to Dickens in his palmiest days. The strange glows and shadows of her character are put in lovingly and lingeringly, with the pencil of a master. Miss Margaret's character of light is admirably drawn, while Aunt Lesbia, Deacon Harkaway, Tom Dorrance, and the master and mistress of Graythorpe poor-house are genuine "charcoal sketches."

STRIKING FOR THE RIGHT. By *Julia A. Eastman.* Large 16mo. Illustrated . 1 75

While this story holds the reader breathless with expectancy and excitement, its civilizing influence in the family is hardly to be estimated. In all quarters it has met with the warmest praise.

THE ROMNEYS OF RIDGEMONT. By *Julia A. Eastman.* 16mo. Illustrated . 1 50

BEULAH ROMNEY. By *Julia A. Eastman.* 16 mo. Illustrated 1 50

Two stories wondrously alive, flashing with fun, sparkling with tears, throbbing with emotion. The next best thing to attending Mrs. Hale's big boarding-school is to read Beulah's experience there.

SHORT-COMINGS AND LONG-GOINGS. By *Julia A. Eastman.* 16 mo. Illustrated. 1 25

A remarkabls book, crowded with remarkable characters. It is a picture gallery of human nature.

KITTY KENT'S TROUBLES. By *Julia A. Eastman.* 16 mo. Illustrated . . 1 50

"A delicious April-day style of book, sunshiny with smiles on one page while the next is misty with tender tears. Almost every type of American school-girl is here represented—the vain Helen Dart, the beauty, Amy Searle, the ambitious, high bred, conservative Anna Matson; but next to Kitty herself sunny little Pauline Sedgewick will prove the general favorite. It is a story fully calculated to win both girls and boys toward noble, royal ways of doing little as well as great things. All teachers should feel an interest in placing it in the hands of their pupils."

LINKS IN REBECCA'S LIFE. By "Pansy." Price, $1.50. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co.

"Pansy" has no rival as an author of the best class of Sunday-school books. Her "Ester Ried" and "Chautauqua Girls" series are models in that important line of literature. Her new book, "Links in Rebecca's Life," is worthy of a place in the same list. This book is an admirable one. Its tone is healthy and stimulating, without a trace of sentimentalism or cant: and its characters are thoroughly natural, such as any reader can recognize in the community in which be happens to live. The heroine, Rebecca, is intensely human, with a noble nature in which many weaknesses hide themselves and come often to the surface. But she is a Christian of the best type, and her aspirations and hard-fought battles inspire enthusiasm in a reader. The Committee on International Lessons couldn't do a better thing than to circulate this book in every part of the land. It shows how the lessons may be made helpful in the daily life, and how the Old Testament may be taught with interest to an Infant School, or to men and women of every congregation.

ECHOING AND RE-ECHOING. By *Faye Huntington.* Price $1.50. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co., publishers.

It shows great ignorance of the Sunday-school literature of our day, when one calls it weak and namby-stuff, with an equal mixture of love-stories, and impossible adventures. The censure is just for a certain class of books, but a large library may be gathered of first-class works admirable alike in moral tone and in literary execution, books which everybody can read with delight and profit. "Echoing and Re-echoing" is a book of this sort, a well-told story, abounding with practical lessons, and inciting to a noble Christian life. The most intelligent opponent of religious novels will find his prejudices giving way in reading it, and a fastidious literary reader will be thankful that children have such good books for moulding their literary tastes.

VIRGINIA. By *W. H. G. Kingston.* 16 mo. Illustrated $1 25

A stirring story of adventure upon sea and land.

AFRICAN ADVENTURE AND ADVENTURERS. By *Rev. G. T. Day, D. D.* 16 mo. Illustrated 1 50

The stories of Speke, Grant, Baker, Livingstone and Stanley are put into simple shape for the entertainment of young readers.

NOBLE WORKERS. Edited by *S. F. Smith, D. D.* 16mo 1 50

STORIES OF SUCCESS. Edited by *S. F. Smith, D. D.* 16mo 1 50

Inspiring biographies and records which leave a most wholesome and enduring effect upon the reader.

MYTHS AND HEROES. 16 mo. Illustrated. Edited by *S. F. Smith, D. D* . . 1 50

KNIGHTS AND SEA KINGS. Edited by *S. F. Smith, D. D.* 12mo. Illustrated . 1 50

Two entertaining books, which will fasten forever the historical and geographical lessons of the school-room firmly in the student's mind.

CHAPLIN'S LIFE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. 16mo. Illustrated 1 50

LIFE OF AMOS LAWRENCE. 12mo. Ill. 1 50

Two biographies of perennial value. No worthier books were ever offered as holiday presents for our American young men.

WALTER NEAL'S EXAMPLE. By *Rev. Theron Brown.* 16 mo. Illustrated . . 1 25

Walter Neal's Example is by Rev. Theron Brown, the editor of that very successful paper, *The Youth's Companion.* The story is a touching one, and is in parts so vivid as to seem drawn from the life.—*N. Y. Independent.*

TWO FORTUNE-SEEKERS. Stories by *Rossiter Johnson, Louise Chandler Moulton, E. Stuart Phelps, Ella Farman, etc.* Fully illustrated 1 50

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY OF WIDE AWAKE.

WIDE AWAKE is as bright as though every page were a face, and every face sparkled with the eyes of daisies. It costs only two dollars a year, post paid, and should be made to gladden the heart of childhood everywhere.—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

We heartily wish it "God speed" in its mission of healthful instruction and pleasure, to the hearths and homes throughout our land. —*Boston Cultivator.*

Every wide-awake girl and boy in the land should subscribe to this beautiful magazine.—*Gazette, Boston.*

If the rising generation proves not to be exceptionally literary, it will not be the fault of our publishers. Another magazine, devoted to the interests of the young, has just been established by D. Lothrop & Co., of this city. It bears the "taking" name of WIDE AWAKE, and is edited by Miss Ella Farman, an accomplished young author. The first two numbers are full of promise in text and illustrations, and the publishers will spare no pains to enhance its attractions. The list of contributors contains the names of many of the most successful writers for children in England and America,—names which are a guaranty of wholesome, as well as pleasant and instructive reading. The WIDE AWAKE is published monthly, at the low price of two dollars per year, by D. Lothrop & Co., 38 and 40 Cornhill, Boston. —*The Literary World.*

Our opinion of the new candidate for popular juvenile favor is very high. —*Cincinnati Times.*

WIDE AWAKE is a juvenile magazine. The contents are by well-known artists and authors. The stories are spirited, bright and humorous, and the illustrations are always excellent. Ella Farman edits this charming magazine, and she seems to be entirely capable of understanding the wants of the boys and girls.—*Philadelphia City Item.*

POPULAR BOOKS.

BY "PANSY."

ESTER REID,	$1.50
JULIA REID,	1.50
THREE PEOPLE,	1.50
THE KING'S DAUGHTER,	1.50
WISE AND OTHERWISE,	1.50
HOUSEHOLD PUZZLES,	1.50
THE RANDOLPHS,	1.50
FOUR GIRLS AT CHAUTAUQUA,	1.50
CUNNING WORKMEN,	1.25
GRANDPA'S DARLINGS,	1.25
JESSIE WELLS,	.75
DOCIA'S JOURNAL,	.75
BERNIE'S WHITE CHICKEN; to which is added, THE DIAMOND BRACELET,	.75
HELEN LESTER; to which is added, NANNIE'S EXPERIMENT.	.75
A CHRISMAS TIME,	.15

BY "PANSY" & "FAYE HUNTINGTON."

MODERN PROPHETS,	$1.50
DR. DEANE'S WAY,	1.25

BY "FAYE HUNTINGTON."

THOSE BOYS,	$1.50
MRS. DEANE'S WAY,	1.25

D. LOTHROP & CO., Publishers.

Boston Public Library
Central Library, Copley Square

Division of
Reference and Research Services

The Date Due Card in the pocket indicates the date on or before which this book should be returned to the Library.

Please do not remove cards from this pocket.

Boston Public Library
3 9999 05406 2219